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An Investigation of Hal Lindsey's Doctrine As Presented In "The Late Great Planet Earth"

By Charles Cook

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BY
CHARLES COOK

An Investigation of Hal Lindsey's Doctrine As Presented in "The Late Great Planet Earth"

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THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED
TO MY DEVOTED
WIFE, TAMARA

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CHAPTER I

ANOTHER BOOK ON MILLENNIALISM?

INTRODUCTION

The question is not, "Do we need another book on the millennium issues?" but rather, "Can we tolerate another book on the theme?" If I were asked to justify this work I would do so on the basis that it takes an *unpopular* position claiming that there will be no millennium to follow the second appearance of Jesus Christ on this planet. Walk the aisles of your favorite religious bookstore and check it out! Clearly fifty percent of all religious books now being offered on the market are on the "pro" millennium theme. And, the greater portion are by hardcore premillennial authors who write about nothing but this theme. Hal Lindsey is far and away the most popular of today's dispensational premillennial advocates.

If this book has any redeeming value it is that I genuinely desire to be plain and understood in my position. I oppose those who promote the second coming doctrines found in Scofield's Study Bible and the more recently popularized theories in Hal Lindsey's *"THE LATE GREAT PLANET EARTH."*[1] I hold no personal animosity or grudge against anyone. Be it clearly understood that this

writer believes the Bible to be the only authoritative book on the subject of God's eternal purposes. I have no theories of my own to promote. Hopefully, dedicated Bible students will find this book useful as an aid in discovering only what God has indeed revealed about the end of time; and more importantly, they will come to discover how they themselves can inherit eternal life through the Son of God.

So, this book only represents its author's personal effort to off-set the flood of books currently being marketed to further dispensational premillennialism, a doctrine he fervently believes to be false. In the last decade there has occurred a revival of interest in these sordid theories, with their time-tables and dating schemes. The religious community deserves an alternate and unbiased viewpoint of what the Scriptures actually teach.

CAN WE JUSTIFY OUR TITLE?

I want to make it absolutely clear that this book is not a personal attack on Hal Lindsey or any other millenarian. It is rather intended to be a confrontation with the doctrines involved in the dispensational theories being popularized by Mr. Lindsey and his fellow advocates. These zealots have aroused a whole generation about something that will never take place.

If Hal Lindsey is offended by my use of his name in our title, I cannot apologize . . . I am doing it deliberately. He is on record for what he believes and in my view that makes him subject to Scriptural

investigation. However, I can relate my reasoning which is that he has become the unofficial spokesman in the minds of average fundamentalist churchgoers for dispensational premillennialism today, and so much so, his name is almost synonymous with the doctrine itself.

I do hope Mr. Lindsey understands that I am using his name only to identify our subject. I have nothing against him. The report I have is that he is "alive and well on planet earth," and is no doubt somewhere right now proclaiming the very theories we hope to herein expose as false.

WHO IS HAL LINDSEY?

This section is included in case there are still a few readers of millennium materials who might not know who Hal Lindsey is. In 1970 he released a book entitled *"THE LATE GREAT PLANET EARTH"* and it has since sold well over ten million copies. Lindsey is a graduate of the School of Theology at Dallas Theological Seminary where he was thoroughly grounded in dispensational premillennialism by that school's president, John F. Walvoord. Walvoord authored a more technical work on the subject in 1959 called *"THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM."* While Walvoord's work is more, as his book jacket says, "a basic text in premillennial theology," Lindsey expounds their premillennial theories in a kind of easy-reading college level style. So, as we said, his book became very popular, especially with younger fundamental church-goers, as he is now the spokesman for standard premillennialism.

Lindsey's sequel efforts are *"SATAN IS ALIVE AND WELL ON PLANET EARTH"* and *"THERE'S A NEW WORLD COMING."* I am absolutely convinced that his publications have been disastrous to the cause of Scriptural truths about the nature of the Kingdom of God and God's final purposes for this age. Needless to say, his works have been highly successful in the area of finance — by this world's standards Hal Lindsey is a very successful man!

I do not ask the reader to share my alarm about Lindsey's theories without himself making an investigation concerning the charges. Anyone who really cares to can compare all claims to the Scriptures, and if done honestly according to the sound principles of hermeneutics, that person will be bound to admit that Lindsey and other premillennialists misapply and force their interpretations on certain passages. This they do to promulgate their preconceived notions.

A SUMMARY OF LINDSEY'S VIEWS

This will be only a brief look at the premillennial programs as outlined by Lindsey and others, but it will suffice until the reader gets into the coming chapters where we deal with details and inconsistencies. The key to Lindsey's predictions is the reestablishment of the modern state of Israel in Palestine which he says was foretold by the Old Testament prophets. Seeing the situation in the Middle East, he concludes that Christ will return in "this generation" to gather the church (living and

deceased) and take them up in the clouds where they will be with him for a seven year "rapture." Meanwhile, back on earth, God's wrath will build up until it is unleashed in "a great tribulation," especially during the last half of the seven year period. Also, during the tribulation period some strong personality called "Antichrist," who Lindsey says is probably alive somewhere on earth right now, will have seized control over all ungodly forces to bring them against tiny Israel. Christ will then lead his people back to earth for a great climactic battle in the Middle East called "Armageddon" in which these evil forces will be defeated. The Devil himself will be bound and Christ will set up his kingdom in Jerusalem and rule over the earth for a "millennium." Lindsey says this will all happen within forty years of 1948 when Israel became a re-established nation. The reader is now asked to consider our conclusion at this point: If Lindsey is right he deserves our serious attention! But, if he is wrong, he deserves our strongest rebuke!

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF WHAT THE BIBLE ACTUALLY TEACHES

The Bible teaches that at Christ's second advent everyone who has ever lived will be resurrected for one general judgment (Matthew 16:27; John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15). At that time Christ will put an end to death and deliver up to God the Father all the redeemed of his kingdom, that is, the church (Matthew 16:18,19; Mark 9:1; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26). The wicked will be punished and those saved,

all believers of all ages who acted by faith to receive salvation when it was available, will be rewarded (John 1:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Hebrews 10:10, 14). This glorification of Christ with the saints will involve their taking on a new existence in the likeness of Christ himself (Philippians 3:20, 21). And so, on that day ALL will be raised and ALL will be judged; the righteous redeemed will go into life eternal and the wicked into eternal punishment (Matthew 25:41, 46). This present order, the material world as we know it, "will be dissolved with fervent heat" (2 Peter 3:9, 10). After the wicked are cast into the furnace of fire and the earth is burned up, "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:40-43).

SOME PRIMARY ACCUSATIONS

In the chapters to follow we will be making several charges against the dispensational premillennial doctrines, but for now we want to cite some specific accusations which bear greatly on the overall scope of our subject. Here, we believe, are the three main areas of confrontation:

(1) It would be characteristic of premillennialists to continue to believe their theories even after they are shown to be out of harmony with the Scriptures. Why? Because their concept of the future and the nature of God's purposes are basically preconceived anyhow! The main points of contention must be argued in the area of hermeneutics, the science of interpretation of Scripture, and not what the

Scriptures themselves really teach. These people are hyper-literalists and their basic problem revolves around their initial approach to the Scriptures.

(2) Premillennialists see their millennium kingdom on every page from Genesis to Revelation. To them it is what every Old Testament prophet was predicting; it is all Jesus ever talked about; and it is all Paul and the other New Testament writers had on their inspired minds. They make the second coming of Christ out to be the entire gospel by itself, thus demoting redemption in Christ and the church to some incidental part of God's plan. The Bible is "picked over" to find selected statements which seem to support their theories. The atonement work of Christ receives far too little of their attention. His first advent, where he manifested God in the flesh, fades into the shadows and is ultimately declared a failure. All attention is shifted to their theories about a coming millennial kingdom on earth. Thus, they are saying the second coming of Christ is the one supreme doctrine. We are simply maintaining that it is a supreme doctrine on a par with the work Christ did in his first coming and in his resurrection.

(3) Dispensational premillennialism is a "this world doctrine" appealing to the carnal side of mankind. Millenarians are as worldly minded and materialistic as were the Jews of Jesus' day. Both parties, the Jews who crucified the

Lord and premillenarians today, can think only in terms of a physical, earthly kingdom. Their preconceptions allow for nothing else, so for God's purposes to call for a spiritual kingdom is inconceivable. Neither party can hear Jesus when he said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Modern premillennialism is identical in its approach to the kingdom of God as was nationalistic Judaism. John the Baptist and Jesus came announcing, "The kingdom is at hand . . ." The Jews, with an earthly government in mind and themselves in power, wanted to force Jesus to bring it in by violence (Matthew 11:11, 12; John 6:1-15). As we shall see, millenarians are substantially identical in their approach to the kingdom today.

CHAPTER II

IS THIS A WORTHWHILE AREA OF BIBLE STUDY?

A study of last things is certainly a worthwhile and legitimate field of Biblical exploration. Anyone desiring a well rounded Bible knowledge should not ignore what God has revealed about the future. As previously indicated, the problem is in getting through the maze of confusion created by the overactive imaginations of futurists.

Millenarians, like Lindsey, have a vocabulary quite their own. They take terms like "the rapture," "the great tribulation," "the great parenthesis," or "the millennium" and use them as though they are common Bible usages. So many of their terms are not even mentioned in Scripture! These just mentioned are not! Also, they take a phrase like, "the coming rapture of the church," which cannot be understood without an explanation, and the explanation given becomes their argument for the doctrine held. This is a vicious and misleading practice. It makes the whole field of eschatology suspect and confusing. Because of this unethical practice we include this chapter to define eschatology and related terms.

WHAT IS ESCHATOLOGY?

The word "eschatology" is derived from two Greek words, "ESCHATOS" meaning "last" and "LOGOS" meaning "word." The simple dictionary definition of the word thus becomes "a study of last things" or "a study of final events." An elaborate treatment of Old and New Testament Eschatology is offered in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Volume II.[1] This source is good for general information, but one should not attempt to formulate a millennial position from it. Again, the Bible should be our only source for doctrine.

INDIVIDUAL & GENERAL ESCHATOLOGY

This whole field of study is divided into two branches: Individual and General Eschatology. Individual Eschatology, just as the term implies, pertains to the condition of, or state of, the individual between death and the time of the general resurrection and judgment of all mankind. Paul indicated that a faithful Christian, whether alive or dead, has a "with Christ" relationship (1 Thessalonians 5:10). In what we often refer to as "Paul's dilemma" he said, in effect, that it is good to be able to live for Christ in the flesh, but it was his greatest desire to "depart, and to be with Christ" (Philippians 1:21-24). Thus, the Holy Spirit speaking through Paul lets us know something about our status immediately after death . . . I take it we will be instantly in the presence of God.

Lazarus, the beggar, ". . . died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22).

Conversely, the rich man in the story, having failed to live for God, "died . . . and lifted up his eyes, being in torments" (Luke 16:23). This story by Jesus, whether a parable or actual historical happening, tells us something about individual eschatology. The soul is not extinct, neither does it sleep, but is conscious immediately following departure from this life. In Revelation 4 we read about "twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments and golden crowns on their heads" (Revelation 4:4). Who are these who sit on thrones in the presence of God? They are departed saints. The overcomers who were washed from their sins in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14).

Concerning the confusion and disagreements surrounding the subject of the state of the dead, Hendriksen writes, "Some believe that when a person dies he simply ceases to be. He goes 'out of existence.' Another believes that the souls of most believers go to purgatory. Still another is of the opinion that we cannot know anything about such matters, or that for both the believer and the unbeliever death means a lapsing into a state of unconsciousness which lasts until the day of the resurrection."[2] None of these are in line with what the Bible teaches, and so again we emphasize the point that the Bible must be studied carefully in order to gain a proper view about last things. As we have seen, the Bible teaches that we shall be conscious and in the presence of God between the time of our own death and the end of the age.

Now, the other area of our subject is called Gen-

eral Eschatology and pertains to all future events that will affect mankind in general. Paul assures the whole race, "So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12). There are several schools of thought ranging from extreme liberalism to far-out millennialism to the real Scriptural teaching.

The liberal school takes in those who "scoff" at what the Bible teaches about things to come. These include the uniformatarians who say things are as they always have been and will continue to be as they are now (2 Peter 3:3, 4). They do not believe in the past supernatural acts of God in the first advent of his Son, such as the Incarnation or Resurrection, and therefore they have no confidence in what the Bible says about any future supernatural acts of God in human affairs. To them the whole area of eschatology is so much "mumbo-jumbo" which they would classify as a delusion. One said, "Any expectation of the coming of Christ is as misguided as to wait for the archaeologists to dig up evidence for the fall of Adam." His statement is an obvious give-away, anyone who sees the fall of Adam as a myth would also see the second coming of Christ as the same. But Paul said both events are real, and just as sure as one has already happened, the other one will happen. In 1 Corinthians 15:22 he wrote, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Some liberal theologians, such as C. H. Dodd, have a term they call "realized eschatology" in which they maintain that the first advent of Jesus

actually fulfilled all eschatology. They feel there will be no further action from God, all promises were fulfilled in the first coming of Christ. Concerning this view, William Cox writes, "While we feel that he (Dodd) has carried a good element of truth too far, and even though we do not agree with his ultimate conclusions, it must nonetheless be admitted that his thesis concerning realized eschatology contains within it a great germinal truth. That is to say, much which has been relegated to the future is in reality a matter of actual history."[3] We too want to be dis-associated from these extreme liberals and their conclusion that the Scriptures are not concerned with anything yet future. There are many promises of God still to be fulfilled! But, as Cox points out, the far-out millenarians are to be likewise criticized for insisting that God has not yet fulfilled certain prophecies when the Bible and history says he has. They insist that passages like Daniel 2 and 9, Isaiah 11, Jeremiah 30 and 31, Ezekiel 37 through 39, Matthew 24 and Revelation 4 through 22 have not yet been fulfilled, whereas, we maintain that by far the greater portions of these prophecies have at this point in time already been fulfilled.

WHERE LINDSEY FITS IN

Lindsey is typical of these far-out millennialists who mainly use the Bible to build chronologies and scenarios for the future, and who press current events into signs to show that the end is imminent. According to Mr. Lindsey the great prophetic passages cited above, plus several others we could have mentioned, were not fulfilled in Christ's first

coming. It doesn't matter to him that Jesus said that "ALL" that was written in the Psalms, by Moses and by the Prophets was fulfilled in his first advent (Luke 24:44). Hal Lindsey says, "NO, they are being fulfilled before our very eyes." He says the generation following the 1948 founding of modern Israel will see them fulfilled. He points to the so-called rebirth of Israel as the first step and the recapturing of Jerusalem in 1967 was supposedly the second. Now we are to simply wait and watch the Middle East situation develop. When Russia (Gog) and the Arab-African nations are about to make their advance on Israel, Christ will secretly rapture the church out of the world and this will set the stage for a series of calamities, or tribulations, to be unleashed on earth. As Russia invades the Middle East she will come into conflict with Red China and Western Europe (this turns out to be the European Common Market on the revived Roman Empire). The leader of revived Rome, Antichrist, will at first befriend tiny Israel, and will even encourage them in the rebuilding of their temple, but later he will show up in Jerusalem to declare himself deity. Lindsey says all this will result in a final battle called Armageddon with Russia and her allies coming on Israel from the north, all the combined powers of Western Europe led by Antichrist (the United States probably included here) coming on Israel from the west, plus hordes of Chinese pouring in from the east. Near the end of this great conflict Christ will appear in the clouds with the church and the hosts of heaven to end this battle and rescue the earth from ashes. All of this, plus some details we have

not yet mentioned, was dreamed up in the nineteenth century by a John N. Darby, made popular in the early part of the twentieth century by C. I. Scofield and is currently promoted by Hal Lindsey, John F. Walvoord and others to the extent of general acceptance in the denominational world. It can boast of absolutely no support from the Word of God. It is heresy!

THE PLACE OF ESCHATOLOGICAL STUDIES

So, in summarizing our definition of eschatology, we must reject the liberal's attitude that eschatology is nothing at all as well as the millenarian's attitude which is that it is everything. The Scriptures show us what degree of importance to assign to this study, it is simply something. Near the middle of the first century the Thessalonian church developed a keen interest in the second coming and Paul dealt with the subject in his early epistles. But in his later writings he dealt with the subject less frequently. Our conclusion? Paul thought of the subject as rudimentary and one to be studied early in the Christian's life. He did not approach it as the single most important doctrine of the Christian system, but rather as one of many cardinal issues of the faith. We reiterate, eschatology is a legitimate study and one to be appreciated. Every student should be well aware of how easy it is to theorize and abuse Scripture relative to this field.

ESCHATOLOGICAL TERMINOLOGY

It seems proper to go ahead here and give a glossary of some of the other words and terms used so abundantly by millenarians in their books and lectures. It is to be remembered that, while many of their words and terms are fabricated to accomodate their theories, some of them are quite legitimate and Biblical. This is a brief list and is given only to enable us to make a distinction between those concepts which are indeed Scriptural and those which have been fabricated by millenarians.

(1) *MILLENNIALISTS* — This is anyone who believes in a reign of righteousness and peace by Christ on earth for a thousand years after the Christian Age. A single passage of Scripture, Revelation 20:1-7, and a misinterpretation of the rest of the Bible, in particular, prophetic writings are offered to substantiate their views. Premillennialists believe Christ will return before the millennium. Classic premillennialism dates back to the second and third centuries and has been made popular again as dispensational premillennialism. Postmillennialists believe Christ will return after a literal millennium as its climax. They look for a steady growth of righteousness until the Word of God virtually rules the whole earth. It is easy to see why many are skeptical of this approach today. Finally, amillennialists are in effect non-millennialists. They believe that Christ will return to earth in his own time to judge the world and usher in the eternal state of heaven and hell. They believe the thousand years of Revelation 20 has a symbolic value representing a space of time in

the Christian Age.

2. *DISPENSATIONALISM* — Dispensation is a term used in the New Testament having to do with "stewardship or management of another's household or estate as in Luke 16:2-4 and 1 Corinthians 9:17."[4] From its Greek form we get our English word "economy." The KJV translates it "dispensation" in Ephesians 1:10; 3:2; Colossians 1:25. In these places Paul is speaking of the difference between the three economies or dispensations read of in the Bible, namely, the Patriarchal (Adam to the giving of the Law), the Mosaic (from the Law to the death of Christ), and the Christian (establishment of the church to the end of the world). In fact, his main distinction in these passages regards only the differences between the Jewish and Christian administrations. John clearly shows this distinction in John 1:17, "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." To these three mentioned, the millenarians add as many dispensations as needed to promote their theories. The majority of them hold that there are seven dispensations: (1) Innocence (Garden of Eden), (2) Conscience (Eden to the Flood), (3) Government (Noah to Abraham), (4) Promise (Abraham to Moses), (5) Law (Moses to Christ), (6) Grace (Christ to the Second Coming), (7) Millennium (Reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years). This is not what Paul meant by "rightly dividing the Word of God" (2 Timothy 2:15). Some dispensationalists can find more than seven of these periods, some see less . . . it all depends on what

number is needed to fit the theory being promoted. Usually, dispensationalism teaches that since God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, so human history will last seven dispensations, the last being the millennium age. States Charles Ryrie, an associate of Walvoord and Lindsey and a dispensational expert in his own right, "The dispensations are LIKELY seven in number . . ."[5] Further he said, "The understanding of God's differing economies is essential to a proper interpretation of his revelation within those various economies."[6] From this fabricated premise, Ryrie and other premillennialists talk about "dispensational truths" thereby they insinuate that unless we listen and accept their approach to the Scriptures we will never be able to understand the deeper meanings of God's Word. By the use of these arbitrary dispensations they are attempting to prove that God's climactic purpose will unfold in their supposed millennial kingdom instead of the church in this age. If they are wrong in their approach, and they are, then it is right to oppose their entire system.

(3) *PROPHECY* — This word in its Biblical usage "signifies the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God"[7] and includes all preaching, teaching, exhorting and proclaiming of God's Word and not just predictive statements or forecasts. To the millenarians the word only pertains to "predictions" and to justify their emphasis on the future they often quote Paul, "Despise not prophesyings . . ." (1 Thessalonians 5:20). According to our definition of the

word "prophesyings," the word has to do with the total or overall speaking forth of God's divine counsel. The prophecy buffs would limit the word to cover the area of foretelling the future only. In fact, they carry the matter a step further. They call Hal Lindsey, and others of his reputation, "students of prophecy." This means that he is accepted by pre-millennialists as one who can interpret the Scriptures so as to define what the future holds. He is a scholar in that he can so apply the literal interpretation to Scripture that it will favor their pre-millennial theories. Thus, Hal Lindsey is a modern prophet . . . to their way of thinking.

(4) *ARMAGEDDON* — This word appears only in Revelation 16:16 (Har-Magedon in ASV) and is probably used by John because of the historical battles fought at a place called Megiddo (2 Chronicles 35:22-24; 2 Kings 23:29, 30; Judges 5:19-21). John uses it as a symbol of the final contest between the forces of good and evil. Millenarians reject this idea, claiming that there is to be a literal world-wide conflict that will usher this age out and a new age in.

(5) *RAPTURE* — We will not define this word in detail for now in that it will be more fully discussed in a future chapter. Suffice it to say that it is not a word found in Scripture, but contrived by millennialists. To them it will be a future event when Christ returns to secretly take the church up out of this world just prior to the awful seven years of tribulation. It is supposed to be a sudden, secretive operation not to be confused with a visible return of Christ, which they say will happen after the seven year tribulation.

They say the event is clearly described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 which we will see is untrue. Obviously this part of their theory is subject to much speculation.

(6) *TRIBULATION* — As suggested before, this period is supposed to cover a specific period of time just prior to the battle of Armageddon, namely, seven years of unparalleled trouble and persecution on earth while the church is raptured to heaven. This period of time is supposed to be the seventieth of Daniel's seventy week prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27). Millenarians also defend this theory by referencing Daniel 12:1; Jeremiah 30:7; Matthew 24:21, 22 and any other prediction of extensive disaster found in the Bible.

(7) *ANTICHRIST* — There are many antichrists according to John, and there is a "spirit of the antichrist," or influence which is against Christ (1 John 2:18; 4:3). The word is used by John to teach that there are forces which work "against Christ." Millenarians claim that a single personality will arise at the end of this age, and this "Future Fuehrer" will be the arch enemy of Christ (Revelation 13:1-10; 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4).

SOME GREEK WORDS RELATED TO ESCHATOLOGY

MARANATHA — For those who dearly love the thought of Christ's return, and earnestly pray for it, there remains in 1 Corinthians 16:22 of KJV, ASV and NASV a beautiful untranslated Greek word *"MARANATHA."* The NIV translates it into literal

English, "Come, O Lord." Some Greek scholars think it was a password, or a word of special greeting among early Christians. And so, the translators of our most reliable versions thoughtfully rendered the word in its Greek form instead of its English equivalents. This way it retains its beauty as a prayer ("Our Lord, come") or a declaration ("Our Lord comes!").

The word has carried a special meaning to believers in every generation, and whether used as a prayer or statement of fact, it especially brings Christ's return into prominent view. Perhaps it should be defined and expounded more often as we gather around the Lord's Table! As Vine reminds us, "As to the reason why it was used, most probably it was an often used word among early Christians, as embodying the consummation of their desires."[8] The objective of gathering around the Lord's Table is to remember his death and resurrection and look ahead ". . . till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:26b).

Yes, it's true . . . the word is frequently used by premillennial authors. It happens to be the very last word in Hal Lindsey's book, but it is also in God's Book, and we should be using it in more of our prayers and sermons . . .*MARANATHA!*

PAROUSIA — This Greek word frequently appears in the New Testament to describe Christ's return and always when used in this context it denotes his real or bodily presence. When *"PAROUSIA"* is applied to the second coming of

Christ it is always rendered "coming" (i.e., 1 Corinthians 15:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1). Vine says it "denotes both an arrival and a consequent presence with."[9] Thayer confirms that it has to do with "coming, arrival, advent."[10] In Greek literature it was connected with the visit of some distinguished person or nobility. It was used to exalt the personal character of the one to whom it referred. The disciples used it in asking Jesus about his "coming" (Matthew 24:3). Likewise, Jesus used the word in answering their inquiry (Matthew 24:27, 37 and 39). He did not use the word in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem which is the topic for the first part of the Olivet Discourse, he used it to explain the nature of his personal, bodily return. The New Testament writers used it in the same context (1 Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 8; James 5:7, 8; 2 Peter 1:16; 3:4, 12; 1 John 2:28). Greek authorities stipulate that *"PAROUSIA"* cannot mean a mere spiritual presence; and when used of our Lord's return, it always means his actual, personal, bodily presence.

The Jehovah's Witnesses maintain that Jesus returned years ago (in 1914), but we did not observe it because it was in an invisible sense. The word *"PAROUSIA"* rules that out and John assured us too, "every eye shall see him" (Revelation 1:7). The premillennialists maintain that Christ will return secretly, resurrect the saints, rapture the church, and after a time interval of seven years will again return to rule the earth. This calls for two comings (*"PAROUSIA"*) whereas the New Testament

speaks of only one, and the word *"PAROUSIA"* contradicts any theory calling for a secretive, non-visible return of Christ. This word is as damaging to the millenarians as it is to the Witnesses.

EPIPHANEIA — This is another New Testament Greek word which was used by Paul to refer to Christ's return, and it is rendered "coming or appearing" in most English versions (i.e., 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Titus 2:13). Vine says the word simply means "an appearing, a manifestation, a shining forth" and was often used to describe "the appearance of a god to men, or of an enemy to any army in the field."[11] This would suggest that the next appearance in this world by our Lord will be the blessed hope of the believer, and it will spell doom for all unbelievers. Hebrews 9:24-28 suggests that Christ first appeared, or was made manifest, on earth in human form to be an atonement for sin; then he appeared, or was manifested, back in heaven to be our advocate before God in this age, at the end of which he will once again appear, or be made manifest, to redeem the saved and conclude God's purposes for the earth. There is no suggestion of the premillennial schedule in any of the passages where this word *"EPIPHANEIA"* is used.

APOKALYPSIS — This Greek word is derived from two words, *"APO"* meaning "from" and *"KALIPSIS"* meaning "that which is hidden." From all of this we get our Anglicized word, Apocalypse. It means "to disclose, manifest, unveil or take the cover off."[12] So, the last book of the New Testa-

ment is referred to as the Apocalypse, a book that draws aside the veil and reveals "the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (Revelation 1:19). The book claims to be an unveiling of "things which must shortly come to pass . . ." (Revelation 1:1) and therefore, cannot be a description of end of the age events seeing that it has been about nineteen hundred years since the book was written. The Apocalypse, the Book of Revelation, does not confirm the theories of premillennialism.

SO, SHOULD BELIEVERS BOTHER WITH ESCHATOLOGICAL STUDIES?

Yes, there is a blessing for those who study eschatology. Paul called the end of the world and the coming of Christ "the blessed hope" (Titus 2:13). The only healthy view of eschatology is seen in those individuals who live in daily preparation for meeting the Lord. After instructing his disciples about the certainty of his return, and making it crystal clear that no one knows when that will be, Jesus ended his lesson with these words: "And what I say unto you I say unto all, WATCH" (Mark 13:37). How sad that so many Bible students fail to take up a study of "last things" simply because of the confusion surrounding the subject. Most simply take Hal Lindsey's word that the Bible teaches the premillennial doctrines . . . they do not study for themselves. A true student of eschatology is one who is determined to let only God's Word prepare him for what is to come. This will develop a proper

sense of expectation and urgency in all of us regarding the Lord's return. Nothing will arouse us more, make us see our responsibilities to live daily for God and take the gospel to our lost world than will a realization that God has yet to act in human affairs to complete his purposes. And, while those activities will not last a thousand years, we can still get excited about them! In fact, we must!

CHAPTER III

HOW SHALL WE APPROACH THE SCRIPTURES?

People have always been mislead by brilliant and charming personalities, and especially by those who misuse the Scriptures for their own purposes. This, above all, is why the system called Biblical Hermeneutics is so important.

THE SCIENCE OF HERMENEUTICS

Terry, in his classic work, said, "Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation . . . This science assumes that there are divers modes of thought and ambiguities of expression among men, and, accordingly, it aims to remove the supposable differences between a writer and his readers, so that the meaning of the one may be truly and accurately apprehended by the other."[1] The Bible was written so that men could understand its meaning, and that happens when they are willing to possess an attitude of being open-minded and teachable. The apostle Peter wrote, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20, 21). Peter is affirming that since all prophecy came through the Holy Spirit, the best

method for arriving at an understanding of prophecy is to let the Spirit also do the interpreting. This is the purest method of interpretation. Foy E. Wallace wrote, "The Jews believed their prophets and their prophecies, but these same Jews were mistaken about what their prophecies meant, and they were wrong in their application of the prophecies. The inspired men of the New Testament had to say to the Jews, 'This is that which was spoken by the prophets.' Dipping back into the Old Testament, and taking a certain prophecy, the New Testament writer would say to the Jew, 'this is that,' in which case 'that' was 'this' and THIS was THAT, when a New Testament writer so applied it."[2] In other words, we can be sure about the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy if a New Testament writer interprets it, but it is quite another matter for us to unquestionably take the interpretation of an uninspired man like Hal Lindsey. If an inspired New Testament writer says, "This is that which was spoken by the prophets," then THAT'S THAT! If Hal Lindsey says, "This is that . . ." then watch out!

We do not believe that false doctrines originate from men who open-mindedly examine the Word of God for understanding and faith. They rather result from an opposite approach where men with preconceived theories read into the Scriptures what they already believe. It is obvious that some have dredged through the Bible for proof-texts, and have not taken care to understand each passage in its context or even taken the trouble to get the passage's surface meaning. The science of Hermeneu-

tics demands that every passage of Scripture be applied and used only in its context. "Any passage taken out of context is a mere pretext," uttered some wise old sage. Every honest student of the Bible must ask: "Who wrote this passage? When did he write it? To whom did he write it? Why did he write it? What does it mean in its context?" With this disposition he is ready to receive correct answers to the meaning of most Bible passages. If the premillennial authors should suddenly adopt this honest procedure they would be forced to discard or rewrite all their books.

AN EXAMPLE OF PREMILLENNIAL ABUSE

Paul related the proper attitude when he wrote, "But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully . . ." (2 Corinthians 4:2). While it is true that the Word of God will "abide forever" and "shall not pass away," (1 Peter 1:25; Matthew 24:35) Paul made it absolutely clear that it can be perverted or handled "deceitfully." The NASV uses the word "adulterated," and a thing is said to be adulterated when you change its purpose or meaning, or add a foreign or inferior substance to it. We are maintaining that dispensational premillennialism is a foreign and inferior doctrine which Lindsey and his cohorts have forced into a Bible perspective. Peter warned that some "distort" the Scriptures "to their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16).

For example, an illustration of premillennialist's distortion and misapplication of Scripture is seen in

what they do to a topical study of the word "kingdom." Dispensationalists do not see God's kingdom as possibly being eternal or spiritual, but understand it only in a physical sense. In order to keep sight of a physical kingdom they have divided the Bible into various units, or dispensations. The theme of the Bible is changed from redemption to God's efforts to set up this physical kingdom. They can easily think of national, physical Israel of the Old Testament as God's kingdom, but not the church. In fact, they insist that the church is only an interim arrangement, a postponement, an afterthought and could not be the promised kingdom of the Old Testament. It is unthinkable for them to consider that the church might be the indestructible, eternal kingdom forseen by the prophet Daniel (Daniel 2:44).

They ignore the fact that Jesus used the words "church" and "kingdom" interchangeably (Matthew 16:18, 19). A great amount of effort is put into making a distinction between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. Why? Because they "limit the kingdom (of God) to a period of one thousand years, place it in the future altogether, and give it a prescribed location."[3] The kingdom of heaven is indeed seen as God's constant, eternal, spiritual reign, but the kingdom of God is only seen as his future reign on earth which the prophets foresaw. To the dispensationalist the church does not measure up to the glorious description of God's kingdom promised in the Old Testament. Jim McGuiggan aptly writes, "This 'failure' of the

church to meet up to the glory of the kingdom promised in the Old Testament is a decisive factor in the vitality of premillennialism. If it could be shown that the kingdom of Christ (the church) is indeed the Old Testament kingdom (of prophecy) and that the glory of those prophecies is really and truly (though not always literally) fulfilled in the kingdom of Christ today — if that could be done, and the nagging discontent dispensed with, premillennialism would remain the interest of only the few."[4] We concur and wish it were possible to get individuals to study their Bibles until everyone is personally convinced that the kingdom of God, kingdom of heaven, kingdom of our Lord, kingdom of Christ, the church and all such terms are interchangeable references to the same entity.

The following passages are given to show that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are used interchangeably: "And from the days of John the Baptist until now *the kingdom of heaven* suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force" (Matthew 11:12). "The law and the prophets were until John: From that time the gospel of *the kingdom of God* is preached, and every man entereth violently into it" (Luke 16:16). "From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent, ye; for *the kingdom of heaven* is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). "Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and *the kingdom of God* is at hand: repent ye and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:14, 15). "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is

the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). "... Blessed are ye poor: for yours is *the kingdom of God*" (Luke 6:20). "And as ye go, preach, saying *the kingdom of heaven* is at hand" (Matthew 10:7). "And he sent them forth to preach *the kingdom of God*..." (Luke 9:2). These are only a few of the places where these two terms are used interchangeably, and the only explanation is that they are synonymous.

THE KINGDOM AND THE CHURCH

Now, why do the premillennial advocates keep insisting that the kingdom of God is yet future, that it is not the church, and that it is separate from the kingdom of heaven? Because they cling to their preconceived notion that the kingdom must be physical and include fleshly Israel . . . they want an earthly, physical kingdom and they intend to have it. They willingly twist the Scriptures to get their way!

Lindsey claims the Old Testament prophets completely "overlooked" the church age in their writings. Supposedly, they saw the Messiah coming to suffer and atone for sin, and then saw him returning beyond the church age to reign over the kingdom. They explain that the prophets saw only the mountain tops, the peaks of God's future plans, but not the valleys. These two events, the first and the second advents of the Messiah, are said to be "separated by a valley of time,"[5] or a great parenthesis. This "parenthesis" in God's prophetic program explains, so we are to believe, why the church is not mentioned in the Old Testament.

Most of the juggling, twisting and theorizing done by millenarians is an effort to place God's Kingdom in their future millennium. They will go to any extreme to deny that the Scriptures teach that the promised kingdom of the Old Testament is realized in the church. One explained Jesus' statement, "My kingdom is not of this world," to mean, "My kingdom is not of this world . . . yet." The statement in its setting shows Jesus on trial before Pilate explaining that his kingdom is of a spiritual nature and not a physical one (John 18:36). By adding one word, "yet," the real meaning of the Lord's remark is completely negated. This is the same trick Satan pulled on Eve in the garden, he added one word to God's statement. We are saying that this is typical of how millenarians treat the Holy Scriptures.

In 64 A.D. Paul wrote that he was already in the kingdom (Colossians 1:13). In 96 A.D. John said he too was a part of God's Kingdom (Revelation 1:9). If the kingdom was yet future, how could these inspired men have been so misinformed as to think they were in it? The prophet Daniel predicted that God's Kingdom would be set up in the days of the Roman Empire which ended 476 A.D. (Daniel 2:44). If the kingdom did not come before that time then Daniel too was mistaken. That same prophet said the "Son of man" would receive a kingdom when he went "with the clouds of heaven and came to the Ancient of Days." Christ ascended with the clouds and came to God, and received the kingdom, "that all people, nations and languages should serve him" (Daniel 7:13, 14). It was to be an everlasting king-

dom! The New Testament teaches that a kingdom was received in the days of the apostles that cannot be "shaken" (ASV) or "moved" (KJV) (Hebrews 12:28). The church was that kingdom received in the days of the apostles.

Notice another statement by Jesus, "And I appoint you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Luke 22:29, 30). Whenever this supper of the Lord is to be observed, those observing it will be in the kingdom. In Acts it is recorded that the early Christians faithfully kept this feast on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul furnished instructions on how this supper was to be observed. Where was the Lord's Supper to be located? In the kingdom. And where do we find it being observed? In the church. Therefore, the church and the kingdom are the same!

Lindsey, Walvoord and others, through their crafty misuse of Scriptures to defend their supposed future kingdom, have done serious harm to the image of the church in this age. They have Jesus a failure and the church a substitute, all to protect their precious millennial dreams. And, as though that wasn't enough, they have succeeded in converting millions to their premillennial beliefs.

THE CRUX OF THE MATTER

When a man puts his theory, his fantasy, on the same level with the words of Scripture, he is guilty of a serious impropriety. This is exactly what these futurists have done. They have given priority to

their theories over an open-minded examination of the Word of God. They are materialists and want a physical, earthly kingdom — they are in love with this world — their theories call for a national kingdom like Israel of old — a governmental economy ruled by Christ to dominate the whole earth. By using the dispensational approach, forcing a literal interpretation on all of the Old Testament prophecies and making them absolutely unconditional, millenarians have discovered they get what they always wanted . . . a physical, earthly kingdom. But the questions arise: Can all of God's promises to Israel, or prophecies about Israel, be interpreted literally? Who is God's Israel today? Were all of God's promises to Israel unconditional? These and other equally pertinent issues stand between the millennialists and their imaginary future kingdom.

We agree with Walvoord when he wrote, ". . . the crux of the millennial issue is the question of method of interpreting Scripture."[6] We agree that no progress can be made toward resolving our differences until a uniform method, a single approach, to the Scriptures can be accepted by all.

THEIR EXTREME LITERAL APPROACH

This method of getting to the real meaning of the Bible, particularly prophetic passages, is to discard any possibility of a figurative, symbolic or spiritualized application. Everything must be interpreted literally. Walvoord concedes however, "Premillenarians recognize that all Scripture cannot be interpreted literally."[7] While he agrees that the Bible

has some symbolic language, such as "four corners of the earth" (Isaiah 11:12), meaning in a figure of speech the four directions or extreme regions of the earth, he maintains that a literal understanding of every passage must be forced and that especially prophetic passages must be pressed into an extreme literal context. He would have the Isaiah 11:1-10 passage interpreted so literally that it would require a behavioral change in the plant and animal kingdoms before the millennial kingdom could be realized.[8] Walvoord writes concerning their position, "The literal method is the method recognized in the fulfillment of prophecy and is the mainspring of the premillennial interpretation of the Scriptures."[9] In other words, the entire theory of dispensational premillennialism would be destroyed if the extreme literal interpretation of prophecy was discredited as a method of interpretation.

Lindsey remarks, "To us the biggest issue is over the question, 'Does God keep his promises?' "[10] I would ask this question too if I understood, or deeply hoped, that Christ is to sit upon a literal earthly throne over a literal earthly kingdom. But what if God kept his promises through the church, his spiritual kingdom? Again, Lindsey maintains that the Old Testament "unconditionally promised Abraham's decendants a literal world-wide kingdom over which they would rule through their Messiah who would reign upon King David's throne."[11]

Lindsey, Walvoord and their colleagues will have it no other way — God's promises of the Old

Testament relative to the Messiah's Kingdom is yet future and must be fulfilled in the literal sense.

LITERALISM ALWAYS SPELLS TROUBLE

In his book, which examines this subject of literalism thoroughly, Jim McGuiggan gives a sample listing of passages "which millennialists cannot literalize without running into trouble."[12] They are:

1. To literalize Isaiah 11:6-10 is to deny (Logically) that Paul applied it correctly to the first century (Romans 15:10-12).
2. To literalize Ezekiel 16:53-55 would require the resurrection of the lost people of Sodom to former prosperity in spite of Jude 7.
3. To literalize Ezekiel 37:24, 25 would require that David and not Jesus (see 37:22) would be Israel's sole and eternal king.
4. To literalize Ezekiel 37:25 would require that Israel spend eternity on this earth and in the area wherein their fathers had dwelled. This would mean they could never inherit on the new earth and would give them trouble in light of 2 Peter 3:10.
5. To literalize Isaiah 11:11-16 would require that the two kingdoms of Israel have independent existence ("both" and "together") and also that long gone nations (Philistia, etc.) also be restored to national existence and their former habitats.
6. To literalize Isaiah 34:5-17 would require that the land of Edom will exist eternally here on this

earth and burn eternally while weeds and wild animals prosper in it.

7. To literalize Micah 5:2-7 would require that the long gone Assyrian empire rise again and attack Israel. it would also require Christ delivering Israel from Assyria.
8. To literalize Isaiah 19:18-25 would require the resurrection of the long dead Assyrian empire and that Assyria along with Israel and Egypt would be one of the top three nations of the world under God.

"What does all this prove?" McGuiggan concludes, "It proves that the basic presupposition of the premillennialist is not sound — he is too extreme in the matter (and in addition to which he isn't consistent)."[13] In Isaiah 11:6 it mentions "lions" in the kingdom, but Isaiah 35:9 says "No lion will be there . . ." If everything is to be taken literally, then we must deal with an inconsistency in God's Word. On the other hand, if the word lion is used in these references to stand figuratively for something (like violence and viciousness) then there is no contradiction. We conclude with McGuiggan, "Interpret Scripture literally when you can but hang on to your common-sense and leave room for Hebrews 1:1."[14]

A MORE REALISTIC APPROACH

There is another approach besides the strict literal one that involves a more sensible way of getting the meaning of a Biblical passage, including the prophetic ones. Here we interpret Scripture with

Scripture. This is the proof-text method and demands that no verse be taken out of its contextual setting. Where possible we must indeed interpret Old Testament prophecies literally, but we must be sensible enough about it to recognize that there are many which are to be interpreted in a nonliteral way. Obviously, the New Testament spiritualizes many Old Testament concepts like Mount Zion, the city of Jerusalem, the seed of Abraham and the nation of Israel. Mount Zion and the city of Jerusalem are both used figuratively in Hebrews 12:22 to describe the church and the status of those in it. Writing to those in the church, Paul said, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 4:29). In Galatians 6:16 Paul refers to the church as "the Israel of God." Remembering the words of Foy E. Wallace, "If a New Testament writer says 'this is that' then *this is that!*"[15]

Having previously looked at the very descriptive language of Isaiah 11:6-9, let us use it here as an illustration:

> "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:6-9).

Anthony A. Hoekema, an amillennialist, states, "One will see a millennium here only if he has previously put on his millennial glasses!"[16] And again he states, ". . . if one does not believe in a future earthly millennium, he will certainly not be compelled to accept it by the reading of these verses."[17] So, without a preconceived theory one would hardly know what to believe about this passage. Evidently it describes something wonderful that God intends to do . . . but what?

Remember, the best way to interpret Scripture is with Scripture. If a New Testament writer tells you what an Old Testament prophet meant, then *that's that*! The meaning of Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 11 is clarified by the apostle Paul in Romans 15:12 "And again Isaiah says, There shall come the root of Jesse, and he who arises to rule over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles hope." This prophecy in Isaiah 11 is now fulfilled because the Gentiles have access to salvation as well as the Jews when they trust in Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 2:11-18 Paul relates how God has in this age made both groups, Jews and Gentiles, reconciled in "one body." This body, of course, is the church (Ephesians 1:22, 23).

Now, to make our point very clear, we again quote Foy E. Wallace, "If the Gentiles can trust Christ for salvation now this 'Messianic prophecy' (Isaiah 11) has been fulfilled. But if the prophecy is yet future, as it is contended, then the Gentiles cannot trust Christ now, so why preach the gospel?"[18] There is a great deal more comfort in letting the inspired man, Paul, in his Roman letter

interpret Isaiah's prophecy than in letting Hal Lindsey do it for us in *"Late Great Planet."*

Now, if it can be shown, and I believe it can be, that other passages besides Isaiah 11 which are used by premillennialists as proof-texts are misapplied and inappropriate for substantiating their theories, then they must (but probably won't) concede that premillennialism is false.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT ABOUT THE BOOK OF REVELATION?

As it pertains to our subject, the book of Revelation is clearly the most controversial section of God's Word. How one views this book will determine one's millennial preference.

THE NATURE OF THE BOOK

It has been said that Revelation is controversial, "not because it has been diligently studied, but because it has been ignored." Add to that the fact that by its very nature it is subject to abuse by dishonest and gain-seeking men. God never intended for this great book to be so misused as to mean anything anyone might want to make it mean.

The prologue quite clearly relates the symbolic nature of the book. It relates that the things contained within the book are "signified" (Revelation 1:1). This means that it is a book of signs and symbols, and should not be understood as literal. The mentioning of beasts, dragons, frogs, eagles, horses, chains, bottomless pits, and all such references demand a figurative application. Wayne Jackson writes, "Any view, therefore, of the book of Revelation that fails to recognize its highly symbolic nature; that seeks to literalize its images, is

doomed to absolute failure! And this is the cardinal error of the premillennialists."[1]

Also, it is "the revelation" Jesus gave through John relating "things which must shortly come to pass . . ." (Revelation 1:1). Why God chose to dramatize these impending events by highly symbolic language, I do not know for sure. It is sometimes suggested that he did so to reveal a message of victory to the saints and hide his truths from his enemies. However, Jim McGuiggan writes, "There is no proof whatever for such a view. What's to prevent an enemy from infiltrating an assembly of believers and hearing the message explained? . . . However you understand the book you must take into account that John has explicitly told us it concerns things 'which must shortly come to pass'; things that are 'at hand.' "[2] At any rate, those who read it will be blessed, (Revelation 1:3) and those who misread it will only contribute to the already existing confusion and ultimately be lost. To say the least, it is a delicate set of symbols deserving our most reverential treatment. (See John Waddey's fine article, *"UNDERSTANDING THE REVELATION OF JOHN"* — Appendix A).

THE THEME OF THE BOOK

The key to a proper understanding and application of the book of Revelation is three-fold. First, you must start right in order to end right, and this involves selecting the correct system of interpretation which is in harmony with all of the Bible. Lindsey and other premillennials, by using futuristic and

literalistic approach, start wrong and thus must end up wrong.

Second, you must keep your attention focused on the book's continuous theme, which is, "Christ and the church's conflict with, and ultimate victory over all evil forces." Richard Rogers writes, "It is written to encourage Christians of all time to remain faithful at all costs. It is a message of warning to the church to remain pure and holy from the attack of the world. It is also a message of warning to all who will oppose the church, showing that Christ will eventually triumph, and in doing so God's righteousness will destroy the ungodly . . . the conflict between the church and the world is but the outward manifestation of the war between Christ and Satan."[3] So, Revelation 17:14 can be said to be a concise rendering of the entire book, "These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they also shall overcome that are with him, called and chosen and faithful." Revelation is a message of victory and confidence for the saints of God in any age. It is not, as Lindsey maintains, a detailed description of world events which are to happen just prior to the second coming of Christ.

Third, you must not press every detail of every vision into immediate meanings. It is again best to let the Scriptures interpret the Scriptures. When one starts pressing every detail for meaning he becomes either ultra-literal or ultra-figurative which leads to all kinds of wild and outrageous conclusions. Lindsey tries to force his ultra-literal philoso-

phy on the book of Revelation, and the rest of the Scriptures, and when that fails to sustain his preconceived notions he makes a one hundred percent switch to the ultra-figurative position.

As we saw in chapter III there are rules for approaching the Scriptures, and in addition to those rules there must be a degree of common sense applied. Without the application of both, one will naturally be led into confusion. This is exactly the trap that Lindsey and all futurists have made for themselves. The sensible Bible student recognizes the literal and the figurative from the Biblical context. McGuiggan writes, "This is certain, though an apocalyptic book may have material in it which is to be understood literally, we must reverse the usual rule of interpretation when approaching it. Here is the usual approach to a book: Understand it literally unless forced to do otherwise. In approaching an apocalyptic book the rule is: Understand it figuratively unless there is good reason to do otherwise."[4]

It is no more difficult to distinguish literal from figurative language in the Bible than it is to do the same in secular literature. We know when Milton, Shakespeare or Hawthorne are being figurative and when to take them literally. It always spells disaster to take the literal as figurative, or to take the figurative as literal . . . and it becomes doubly disastrous to practice extremes in these matters. But, again, this is exactly what the premillennialist does! McGuiggan further remarks, "Lindsey makes 'fire and brimstone' equivalent to nuclear explosions;

'locusts' equivalent to Cobra helicopters; 'swords and shields' stand for tanks and missiles. He insists '144,000 Jews' in the text (Revelation 7) must mean just that but 'fire and brimstone' must mean something else. Did it mean something else in the destruction of Sodom If it means nuclear activity in Revelation, why does it not mean that in Genesis? Walvoord refuses to accept '10 days' in 2:10 as '10 days' but insists on '1000 years' in 20:1ff meaning '1000 years' . . . So don't let anyone give you the impression Amillennialists are the only people who figurize."[5] Now perhaps we can better see the absurdity which serves as the premillennial foundation, that is, to insist on a literal interpretation of all Scripture until forced into a ridiculous position, and that in turn necessitates figurizing a part of the Scriptures in an effort to get out of the mess. This is going from extreme literalism to extreme figurativism which can only result in confusion. (The reader is referred to Appendix I and II of Jim McGuiggan's commentary on Revelation for an excellent overview of the millenarian's inconsistencies.)[6]

THE EXTREME FUTURISTIC VIEW

Premillenarians necessarily hold a view of Revelation which makes it a forecasting of events which they believe will take place during their so-called seven year rapture/tribulation era, an event they have scheduled to immediately proceed the second coming of Christ and ushering in of the millennium age. All this is supposed to be clearly explained in Revelation, chapters 4-22.

Millennialists generally teach that the first three chapters, containing a letter each to the seven churches of Asia, represent the various stages through which the church must go prior to the rapture. There is the Ephesus period, Smyrna period and so-forth . . . and, of course, we are living in the Laodicea period.

They say chapter 4 is a picture of the church "raptured" or caught up from the earth to be seen no more in the book until she returns with Christ in chapter 19. All of the events described in chapters 5 through 19 pertain to the awful "tribulation" which is a build-up for the "Battle of Armageddon" and all of this is to take place on earth while the church is safely with Christ in heaven. The book with "seven seals" being held by the throne occupant is said to contain God's plans for the seven years just prior to the beginning of the millennium. Anyone who has ever read the book of Revelation would conclude that the content of the "seven seal book" must be very important, but it is the meaning of what is revealed under each of these seven seals that is disputed. (To get a little ahead of myself, I say they contain God's plan for the church when it faces persecution as it did historically in the first and second centuries . . . or at any time during the Christian Age . . .but let us wait our turn). Lindsey says, "No, that is not what John's vision means," and in his book *"There's A New World Coming"* he spells it all out for us:

(1) After the church is raptured, the identity of the antichrist will be revealed and he will take

complete control of the world. Since all of this is "imminent" the person of antichrist is no doubt living somewhere on planet earth right now.

(2) During the first three and one half years of this seven year tribulation, antichrist will increase in power as he supports the Jews while they rebuild their temple. Also, the Jews are to receive the preaching of resurrected Moses and Elijah during this three and one half years. The results will be that 144,000 Jews are converted, plus an innumerable host of Gentiles (1981-84).

(3) Near the middle of the seven year period, antichrist, having seized enough power, will turn on the Jews and declare himself deity in Jerusalem. About this time the 144,000 Jewish converts will be taken up, along with Moses and Elijah, for a second rapture. This midway point marks the time when things really start to get grim on earth (1984-85).

(4) Now Russia (Gog) will invade the nation of Israel and the whole world will be pulled into this war (WW III) and it is described by all of the plagues spoken of in chapters 6-19 . . . one seal after another is opened, each bringing famine, war and death . . . and then under the seventh seal the trumpets are sounded bringing even greater devastation . . . and then the bowls are poured out representing an unthinkable situation. All of this is said to be the fulfillment of Daniel's Seventieth Week . . . or

terrible seven years of wrath as forseen by that prophet (Daniel 9:24-27).

(5) At the close of the Armageddon battle the Lord will descend from heaven with the redeemed following him (Revelation 19:11-16). (1988).

(6) After the Lord's victory over all evil and Satan is bound for 1000 years, then will Christ set up his earthly kingdom in Jerusalem (Revelation 20:1-10).

(7) Then in Revelation 21 and 22 we see the millennium age fade into the New Jerusalem and the heavenly state will be forever. (The reader will want to compare this section with the summary of Lindsey's views given in chapter I).

SOME PRIMARY OBJECTIONS

Besides our objections to Lindsey's literalizing of apocalyptic language and his futile efforts to fit Revelation into his millennium scheme, there are other viable objections. The whole theory is obviously in basic disagreement with John's statement in Revelation 1:1 where he claimed to be recording things which "must shortly come to pass." In addition to that he wrote, ". . . for the time is at hand" (Revelation 1:3). It has now been almost 2,000 years and the millenarians are still saying with John, "the time is at hand." We know what the millenarians mean, but what did John have in mind when he said this? The word "shortly" comes from two Greek words, *en taxei,* which mean "in haste or

immediately." Richard Rogers humorously and pointedly remarks, "Futurist(s) (sic) state this means 'certainly.' But compare 2 Timothy 4:9. Here Paul using the same word 'shortly' . . . did not say: 'Timothy, I want you to come to me here in Rome. Bring the coat I left with Carpus. I am cold and need it, but there is no hurry — just so you get here in the next two or three thousand years . . .'"[7] Paul meant for Timothy to come quickly, before winter! John uses the same word in Revelation 1:1 regarding the events to be described in his book. It is not that Lindsey and the boys have not yet read the first three verses of Revelation, they just give the whole thing a patronising remark like, "Well, time means nothing to God . . . with him a long time and a short time are the same." McGuiggan has this tart reply, "This would be all right except God was not speaking to himself in these passages. He was speaking to men and women like you and me."[8] To that he adds, ". . . it was God himself in Daniel 8:26 who said 400 years was 'many days.' So we have God on record that 2,000 years is not a short period and such events would not be 'at hand'."[9]

Our other objection at this point is that the futurist's view takes the book of Revelation completely out of its immediate relationship to the church in whose era it was written. What possible blessing or comfort could a first or second century Christian get by reading a book that relates only to the end of the age and gives no immediate assurance of help from God. Christians need a present sense of victory as well as a future one.

Isaiah's prophecies were primarily for the teaching and welfare of his own generation, and then in times of deep despair he spoke of a future hope. All prophecy, by nature, has a message to the generation in which it was written. The same is true of John's writings. His visions contained a message of present victory and security for Christians under Roman persecution and a long-range hope for the people of God in any age.

Our objections are summed up in this — millenarians do not choose to accept the book of Revelation for the purpose for which it was given. They want it to be a forecast of their end of the world theories . . . but God gave it as a message of comfort and assurance to the Christians of John's time as well as to us today.

THE PRETERIST VIEWS

Yes, its true . . . our viewpoint is closely associated with the preterist view which says, "all of the book of Revelation has been historically fulfilled." (*Preter* means "past"). There are within the preterist school of thinking two views with which I must disagree:

(1) The left wing liberal view is defended by modernists who deny inspiration of the Scriptures, thus they deny inspiration to John's writing, claiming that someone besides John probably wrote the book long after John's death which was around 100 A.D. They say he was probably some post-apostolic, apocalyptic enthusiast of the second or third century.

This view is rejected for obvious reasons.

(2) The right wing, ultra conservative view maintains that John wrote the book before the destruction of Jerusalem which happened in 70 A.D. They hold that it was most likely written between 67 and 69 A.D. and all that is described in Revelation was totally fulfilled in the fall of the Jewish economy of 70 A.D. This view hinges on the evidence to support an early authorship prior to Jerusalem's fall, but the weight of evidence favors the conventional authorship date of 96 A.D. This view is rejected because of the dating problem as well as other reasons. (See Wayne Jackson's comprehensive study, *"When Was The Book of Revelation Written?"* — Appendix B).

OUR VIEWPOINT OF REVELATION

The viewpoint adopted in this work could correctly be called a right wing preterist interpretation, but it should not be confused with the aforementioned ultra conservative view. So, for purposes of clarification, let our's be called: The Historical Setting and Prophetic Principle View.

The visions in Revelation symbolize real historical happenings which occurred during John's day and immediately following, but the principles involved apply to every age. It was written to an age of persecution when many were being called on to even lay down their lives for the faith. John writes to comfort them. He assures them of God's vindication against all evil forces as well as their own

personal victories over them. "The Lamb shall overcome . . . and they that are with him . . ." (Revelation 17:14).

Revelation 1:1 tells us that God chose symbolic language as his style of communication. John writes that God "signified" his message. The word "signified" in the Greek means "to make known by the use of signs and symbols."[10] So the signs and symbols so familiar to Old Testament students are used over and over by John to describe God's deliverance of the church from its foes, in this case in John's day, but in principle during any age when the church faces persecution. Over three-fourths of Revelation alludes to Old Testament terminology and it certainly behooves us to be acquainted with the Old Testament if we expect to properly understand the New . . . and that is especially true when we prepare to study Revelation.

So, our view holds that Revelation is predictive of the triumph of the early church of John's day up through the second century when it was so severely persecuted by the dying Roman government. Satan being bound for 1,000 years shows the long-range effects of God's protection of his people. Therefore, our's is an amillennial view.

THE CONTINUOUS HISTORICAL VIEW

Having examined the futurist's view, the varying preterist views, and having briefly outlined our own, it seems inconsistent not to mention one other. This one is called: The Continuous Historical View. We will give it only a passing glance because it is dying

due to its own faulty premise. It looks upon Revelation as a forecast of events to transpire in church history throughout the entire Christian age. This is in contrast to the futurist's view which says Revelation is a forecast of only the last seven years of this age. The continuous historical view is the old Protestant interpretation stemming from the Reformation when everyone wanted to blame everything on the pope. The whole view basically grew out of anti-papal feelings and is too limited and narrow because it tends to make the Roman Catholic Church out to be God's only enemy . . . and, of course, there's Hinduism, Buddhism, Mohammedism, Communism, Cultism, Mormonism, Satanism, and the list goes on. Like the futurist's view, this one too lends itself to the absurd, making every villian in history the antichrist and reading every war, natural disaster or world-shaking event as a sure sign that the world is coming to an end. To illustrate, one man became so caught up in these speculative methods of interpretation when he saw a car license plate which read AMA 666 he immediately became convinced that the American Medical Association was the antichrist.

CHAPTER V

WHAT ABOUT MODERN ISRAEL?

Rarely do I get into a discussion with someone about premillennialism where they do not ask a question similar to this: "Well, what about the Middle East situation . . . isn't the existence of the modern state of Israel proof that Lindsey is right about the end being near and that Christ is about to establish the Kingdom of God on earth?" This question only confirms that what most fundamental religious people believe about today's Israel is not based on Bible, or history for that matter, but rather on the propaganda of dispensational premillennialism. The secular community is also intrigued by Modern Israel but bases its opinions on the influence exerted on behalf of Zionist politics through various media.

FACTORS THAT KEEP ISRAEL PROMINENT

There are three factors that contribute most toward keeping Modern Israel prominent before the world: (1) Much of the world's wealth (especially in the United States and Europe) is controlled by the fourteen million people who today claim to be Jews. A Jewish author by the name of Howard Morely Sachar claims that the most powerful bank-

ing families in the world are Jewish, that the movie industry and the three major television networks are controlled by Jews, and that they exercise great media control.[1] (2) The dispensational premillennialists like Lindsey keep the spotlight on Israel as they stir up fundamental religionists about God's imminent and earthly kingdom. There are also some in the orthodox Jewish community who see Modern Israel as the nation of destiny with a coming Messiah, though not in the same way millenarians see it. (3) And, the oil reserves and other resources in the Middle East, while not controlled by Israel, still serve to keep attention on today's Jews and their place in the world. As attention is focused on the Middle East it is also focused on tiny Israel.

For certain, the attention now being showered on Modern Israel is motivated largely by economics. Politicians keep their eyes glued on the Middle East, not because of their religious beliefs, but rather because they are practical. To most of them Israel has a glorious future because of her economics, political influence, geographical location and resources and not because they believe God has future plans for her. However, we do have Congressmen in Washington D.C. who are premillennial to the extent that everytime a piece of legislation favors Modern Israel they vote for it. Especially if it involves sending arms or aid to them. Like the society of Jesus' day, they think they can help bring in God's Kingdom on earth by force and violence (Matthew 11:12). When those first century Jews saw the power that Jesus had over the material

world, being hard-core materialists themselves, they tried to "take him by force, to make him a king," but he would not have it (John 6:1-15). We certainly have some of these types in power today, but for the most part politicans are motivated by old fashioned filthy lucre and secular power. A recent publication called, *"The Israel Economy,"* estimates that Israel's exports will reach 4.5 billion dollars and imports will reach 5.5 billion dollars by 1980. Considering the fact that Modern Israel is only thiry years old, most economists agree that these figures are impressive, in fact, remarkable.

But does Modern Israel's performance and economic influence among the nations prove what Lindsey and others claim about the imminent coming of God's Kingdom to earth? Is Modern Israel God's time-piece of prophecy? Are today's Jews the same as ancient Israel of Bible history? Are today's Israelis God's chosen people? Indeed the popularity of premillennialism and the wide influence of Modern Israel give validity to all these questions, and to many people it all seems perfectly clear that God is at work in our world through this tiny nation.

THE REALITY OF MODERN ISRAEL

So, the fact that there is a modern government known as Israel is not disputed. During World War II Hitler tried to destroy the Jewish people. Between four and six million were executed. It was one of the great atrocities of all times. When the world heard about it, the United Nations voted to make Pales-

tine a homeland for refugee Jews to live in after the war. On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion announced the formation of the independent State of Israel and this event has commonly been referred to as "the re-birth of Israel." However, we must deny that this new modern state is identical to, or in any major way resembles the Israel of the Old Testament. It is true that for the first time in almost two millennia those who call themselves Jews now have a homeland. Credit must be given for all that they have accomplished since Ben-Gurion's announcement just over thirty years ago. Though they are still a struggling nation, it is agreed that many of their achievements are indeed impressive.

So, we concur with John F. Walvoord when he writes, "No small nation in the history of man has ever provided more front-page news than the nation of Israel in the last thirty years."[2] The news media keeps us constantly aware of Modern Israel's existence and their viability in the world, but it remains true that this tiny nation in the Middle East is not the Israel of old.

However, the mere fact of their existence is evidence enough for Lindsey, Walvoord and others to insist that Scriptural significance is indicated. Walvoord again writes, "What we see today is the first in Israel's four stages of complete restoration, her political restoration. To follow will be her peace treaty period, then her time of trouble, and finally her deliverance from her enemies by the second coming of Christ."[3] The best evidence they have for all of this is the visible return of today's Jews to their home-

land. They argue that all this could not be coincidental, and certainly not just the workings of world politics, so it must be a definite sign that God is fulfilling prophecy. All of the wars and current political action in the Middle East, particularly since the Six-Day War in June, 1967, has given impetus to their arguments. Says Lindsey, "The nation of Israel cannot be ignored; we see the Jews as a miracle of history. Even the casual observer is amazed how the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have survived as a distinct race in spite of the most formidable odds. What other people can trace their continuous unity back nearly 4,000 years?"[4]

It must be kept in mind that an important premise to the millenarian's whole argument is that the modern Israelis are "the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob . . ." and that they can "trace their continuous unity back nearly 4,000 years . . ." But this statement is clearly untrue! All of the Jewish genealogies and records were destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. Modern Judaism is not racial, it is rather a religious and political persuasion. Those who call themselves Israelis today have no historical proof of their ancestry, they only claim to be of Jewish descent. Most of today's Jews came from Europe, Russia or the United States where over the centuries they have repeatedly intermarried with other nationalities. Not one of them can name his tribe or trace himself back to Abraham. To re-establish the Levitical Priesthood and the Old Testament system based on tribal genealogies would be impossible. They were destroyed! The Israelis hold

no clear title to Jerusalem yet, and on the very mount where their temple must be reconstructed stands a Muslim Mosque. The modern state of Israel is not Old Testament Israel in its re-born form as the millenarians would have us think. There is no Old Testament Jewish race today!

A CONCISE PERSPECTIVE OF JEWISH HISTORY

At this point it would be well to do a detailed study of Modern Israel's history, but in order to stay with our subject of millennialism I will give only a brief sketching of that nation's background. This historical survey will help us see that the Israelis of today are not really the ancestors of the Old Testament Jews.

Around 2,000 years before Christ, God called Abraham, a Shemite, to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees (Modern Iraq) and to settle in Canaan (Palestine). Included in Abraham's call was a threefold promise from God (1) His descendants would become a great nation. (2) They would be possessors of a given land area. (3) And, all the families of the earth would be blessed through Abraham (Genesis 12:1-7; 13:14-18; 15:13-21; 17:1-11; 22:17, 18). The Old Testament (Genesis 12 and on) is a record of how God made of Abraham's seed a great nation called the Israelites. In Genesis 15:18 God spells out to Abraham the exact land boundries that his people will possess, "... Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." This land space

included some 60,000 square miles extending from the river of Egypt (this is the Wadi-L-Areesh in the Sinai Peninsula and not the Nile) to the Euphrates and dropping over into what came to be known in modern times as Turkey. The promise included the lands of all the tribes mentioned in Genesis 15:19-21. Later the exact boundaries were given in detail to Moses just prior to Israel's conquest of Canaan (Numbers 34:1-13).

On various occasions God repeated these promises to Abraham as well as Isaac and Jacob. In the repetitious giving of these promises it became clear that the ultimate and important one concerned the seed promise, the Messiah, and not the forming of a physical nation or the possessing of a land. God said to Abraham, ". . . in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18). We can confirm this observation by the preaching of the New Testament Apostles. Peter preached, "Ye are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Servant, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities" (Acts 3:25, 26). And also Paul said, "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentile by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed" (Galatians 3:8). In this same reference Paul made it clear, "that seed was Christ" (Galatians 3:16). So, Christ and the church are seen

as God's ultimate intent. All was fulfilled in Christ, the seed, and the giving of the gospel to save Jews and Gentiles alike, which was the promise to bless every antion. The Jewish Nation and the land promise were incidental and only served to bring about God's real purpose, redemption in Christ (See Galatians 3).

About one hundred years after Abraham's death his descendants immigrated into Egypt to escape a famine and later found themselves in slavery to Egypt's Pharoah. After four centuries they grew to be a mighty nation of about three million. Under Moses' leadership they were freed from Egypt and permitted to resettle the land God promised them. You recall how their fear and unbelief caused them to have to wander in the wilderness forty years before inheriting the land. Finally, God brought them across the Jordan River and they possessed the land under Joshua's leadership. It is most important to notice the words of Joshua 21:43, "So Jehovah gave unto Israel *all the land* which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein." In Joshua 21:45 it further states, "there failed not aught of any good thing which Jehovah had spoken unto the house of Israel; *all came to pass*." (Compare also 1 Kings 4:20,21; Nehemiah 9:23).

The passages cited above confirm beyond any doubt that the Jews did possess *"all the land"* that God had promised them. Millenarians strongly affirm that the land promise has never historically been fulfilled and is yet to be realized in the millen-

nium. Again, they are totally wrong and it should be obvious to anyone that the premillennial theory altogether fails on this one point alone.

For several centuries the Israelites dwelt in the land until the time that God could no longer tolerate their rebellion and sin; so true to his warnings, he expelled them from the land for a seventy year punishment. He had warned them about the consequences of rebellion and established an "if clause" for them to remain on the land (Deuteronomy 28-30). The keeping of the land, once possessed, was based upon the condition that Israel keep God's covenant (Deuteronomy 29:9). They failed to keep the covenant, so God drove them from the land into an exile in Babylon. At the time of this exile God made a very clear statement about the last man to occupy the throne of Judah, Coniah. In Jeremiah 22:30 is recorded, "Thus saith Jehovah, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no more shall a man of his seed prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling in Judah." Here is another instance where the theory of premillennialism is destroyed. God said no descendant of Coniah will ever sit upon the physical throne of David in Jerusalem. Jechoniah is clearly shown to be in the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:12). Here is God promising that Christ will never sit upon a literal, earthly throne in Jerusalem as David did, and the premillennialists maintain that he will. They insist that his throne will be in this world and Jesus insisted that his kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). They have it scheduled to

be in Judea where God said no occupant could ever again prosper and the New Testament has him reigning on the throne of David right now in heaven (Acts 2:29-36).

After the seventy years in Babylonian captivity, God mercifully brought his people back to the promised land under Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. But no longer were they a mighty nation as in the days of David and Solomon; no longer did they prosper on the land; they came back as a mere remnant of a nation (Ezra 9:8). They dwelt in Palestine under the Persian, Grecian and Roman Empires. They enjoyed no glory as before their Babylonian captivity. For another 500 years they lived as a struggling little nation until during the days of the Roman Empire when the Messiah was born (Luke 2:17).

Instead of accepting Jesus as God's Son, they crucified him (John 1:11). For this God once and for all time rejected them. Jesus himself said, ". . . He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father that sent him" (John 5:23). So, in his Olivet Discourse, Jesus prophesied the complete fall of the Jewish economy and his prediction was to come true in the very generation that listened to him speak (See Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21).

Within forty years of Jesus' prophecy, Titus and the Roman Army completely destroyed Jerusalem and scattered the Jews among the nations (70 A.D.). The promised land was no longer their possession. The Temple with all its records and gen-

ealogies was destroyed so that not one stone stood on another. The entire Old Testament system of the priesthood and sacrifices was replaced by Christ and the church. Physical Israel was completely destroyed. Until recent times the Jewish People have had no country of their own. Over the past 1900 years they have so intermarried with other cultures and nationalities, no one today can say with great certainty that he is indeed Jewish. Yes, they have carried on their traditions and orthodoxy, but as mentioned before, their tribal records were so destroyed in the seige of 70 A.D. that no one today can prove anything about his Jewish ancestry. With the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, in fulfillment of Christ's prediction, the Jewish Nation came to an end.

During World War I all of Palestine was put under British control. Arabs had been there for centuries and Jews from various parts of the world were beginning to resettle in the area. This created a prime situation for a renewed conflict between Jews and Arabs, similar to the Old Testament conflicts. In 1947, because of fighting between these two factions, Britain turned control over to the United Nations. Acting as peacemaker, the UN decided to divide the land between Jews and Arabs, however, this settlement was never satisfactory to either side.

On May 14, 1948, the Jews proclaimed their sovereignty, and the modern state of Israel was born. The conflicts between Jews and Arabs continued to worsen. Even the casual history student recognizes the similarity between the conflicts of Sarah and

Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau and the modern Middle East scrimmages.

On June 5, 1967, the Six-Day War broke out and Israel captured Jerusalem and went on to occupy Gaza and the West Bank (Judea and Samaria). They had not held their beloved city for over 1900 years. It was this event more than any other that re-activated the imaginations of the millennial teachers. Second coming sermons came pouring out of pulpits everywhere, especially in the U.S. A flood of premillennial books hit the market. The so-called rebirth of Israel was hailed a sure sign of the second coming and the millennium.

In 1973 the war broke forth again, but on a much smaller scale, and from time to time attacks are still exchanged between these age-old enemies. Certainly the Middle East is an all time trouble spot! But does all of this prove the premillennial contention that modern Israel is ancient Israel being regathered by God in order to fulfill Old Testament kingdom prophecies? Is modern Israel proof of the imminency of the second coming and the millennium age? Who is the true Israel of God today? Is it true the Jews have never yet possessed all the land space God promised Abraham? These inquiries have partially been touched on, a more complete answer follows.

FOCUS ON PREMILLENNIAL ERRORS

In order to make their theories work, dispensationalists must affirm that the Abrahamic Covenant was irrevocable and that there were never any con-

ditions stated whereby they might lose the land or the covenant blessings. They claim that the total land promise made to Abraham was never fulfilled. And, it is asserted that the Israelis in Palestine today are the direct descendants of Abraham. One of their advocates stated, "They (Israel) have been conquered many times but have never been absorbed by their conquerors or lost their identity." Such statements, as we have seen, are irresponsible and clearly untrue! Characteristically, Lindsey maintains that today's Israelis can "trace their continuous unity back nearly 4,000 years."[5]

Millenarians say the promised land was only partially possessed by the Jews and that God later drove them from the land in keeping with his warnings of Deuteronomy 28-30. But, they claim that during the Assyrian and Babylonian Captvities God caused his prophets to utter restoration promises about Israel's future greatness. Seeing that the Jews have never yet received all the land promised to Abraham, and the exile prophets did speak of Israel's future greatness, they conclude that the physical kingdom of Israel will be restored once more. At this point the focus is on two questions: (1) Was the Abrahamic land promise fulfilled during Old Testament days or is it yet to be fulfilled? (2) And, were the exile prophets predicting that God would restore literal Israel to its former physical glory, or were they predicting that the church would be God's new Israel in spiritual glory . . . who is the Israel of God today?

WAS THE LAND PROMISE FULFILLED?

It is true that God specified a certain land area and promised Abraham his descendants would be a great nation and would occupy it — this we saw before (Genesis 12:1-7; 13:14-18; 15:12-21). However, it is not true that God made these promises to Abraham without any conditions. Abraham and his descendants were to practice circumcision as a "token of the covenant" between God and himself (Genesis 17:10-19). A close study of Genesis 17 leaves no doubt but that there was a condition for Abraham and his seed. In verse 4 God said, "As for me . . ." indicating his part in the covenant, and in verse 9 God said, "Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant . . . every man child among you shall be circumcised," indicating Abraham's part. Circumcision was then a condition for being able to inherit the land.

Additionally, it is untrue to say that the Israelites have never historically possessed the total land area God promised Abraham. Joshua 21:43-45 reads, "And the Lord gave unto Israel *all* the land which he sware to give unto their fathers: and they *possessed it,* and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to *all* that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. *There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass."* In his final speech Joshua said, ". . . *not one thing* hath failed of *all the good things* which the Lord your God spake con-

cerning you . . ." (Joshua 23:14). The premillennialists are wrong in saying the Abrahamic land promise has never yet been fulfilled!

Furthermore, the Old Testament teaches that God made conditions for Israel to meet in order for them to continue to stay on the land after they once possessed it (Deuteronomy 28-30). In this section God spelled out blessings which would be given if they kept his covenant, and curses if they failed to keep it. In Deuteronomy 30:1-10 God stipulated that they had to "keep the law of Moses" in order to keep the land. God, foreseeing his chastisement of Israel by means of the Babylonian Captivity for not keeping the Law, made the "keeping of the Law of Moses" likewise a condition for their return to the land after Babylon. From the time of the Judges to the Divided Kingdom, Israel shamefully disregarded God's law, and true to his word, he allowed Assyria (721 B.C.) and Babylon (606 B.C.) to carry them away (2 Kings 17:6; 25:8-10). What the prophets predicted during and after this captivity period concerned not the restoration of physical Israel, but the fulfillment of a spiritual kingdom, God's true Israel, the church.

Bear in mind, in order for Israel to possess the promised land they were to keep the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 30:2). If Modern Israel is to possess the land from the border of Egypt to Iraq they too will have to "keep the Law." Deuteronomy 28 through 30 states this as God's absolute condition for possessing the land. But Christ abolished the Law of Moses (fulfilled it) and "nailed it to the cross"

(Colossians 2:14). Anyone in this age who attempts justification before God by the Law is "fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). (Compare Matthew 5:17; Ephesians 2:15; Hebrews 10:9).

In spite of the facts showing that the land promise has already been fulfilled and the Law of Moses has been abolished, Lindsey is determined to teach that Old Testament Israel will live again.[6] But he and his futuristic friends cannot produce Scriptural support to say the Abrahamic land promise has not been fulfilled, nor can they prove, Scripturally or otherwise, that Modern Israel is connected with God's covenant with Abraham. Let them produce one New Testament passage predicting the rise of physical Israel again . . . then we will be willing to give serious attention to their ideas. But until they produce that passage, we charge them with misinterpreting the Abrahamic Covenant and the Old Testament prophets who spoke of God's purposes in this age.

THE TRUE ISRAEL OF GOD TODAY

Having shown that Modern Israel is not "the Israel of God" or God's People today, we are forced to ask, *"Then who is?"* Paul wrote, "Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7). Again he wrote, ". . . it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God . . ." (Romans 9:8). God does not deal through a fleshly nation today and does not esteem one nation over another. Peter preached, ". . . in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is

acceptable to him" (Acts 10:35). Anyone, whether they be Jew or Gentile, who by faith obeys the gospel of Jesus Christ will be saved (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Those who obey the gospel of Christ are added to the church (Acts 2:47). Paul called those in the church "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16). John writes that those in God's Church are a "kingdom of priests" (Revelation 1:6). God's Israel today is the church and fleshly Israel has been "cast away" (Romans 11:15). Remember what Paul said, "They which are the children of the flesh (Old Testament Jews), these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise (New Testament Christians) are counted for the seed" (Romans 9:8). Of the fleshly descendants of Abraham, Paul clearly indicates that they have been "broken off" (Romans 11:20).

But what about Paul's statement, "so all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26)? This passage is speaking of the manner by which "all Israel" can be saved, namely through faith and obedience to the gospel as with the Gentiles. This passage by no means indicates that God has a separate plan for the Jews and Gentiles to be saved. It rather says that God has one plan, and one plan only, whereby they both may be saved . . . that being the gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16,17).

When writing to the Gentile Christians at Ephesus, Paul reflected on how they were at one time "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without

God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). He added, "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). The "household of God" is the church (1 Timothy 3:15). So, Paul concluded, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13). These Gentiles were now "in Christ" and a part of "the commonwealth of Israel" under a new covenant. They were not the fleshly descendants of Abraham, but Paul declared, "If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). Again Paul proclaimed, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision (being a Jew) availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision (being a Gentile) but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon *the Israel of God* (the Church)" (Galatians 6:15,16). People become God's chosen today not by physical birth, but through the new birth (John 3:5).

CHAPTER VI

WHAT ABOUT THE RAPTURE/TRIBULATION THEORY?

You've seen them . . . those bumper stickers: "See you in the Rapture," "Take the wheel, I may be Raptured," "In case of Rapture this car will no longer have a driver," and *"The Rapture — The only way to fly."* One millenarian said, "If you miss the rapture, you'll probably miss heaven too!" He went on to speculate, "If you miss the rapture, you will find yourself living under the most evil, cruel, unrelenting totalitarian rule of all time . . . All personal rights will be taken away. No doubt electronic eavesdroppers will feed data about you into Antichrist's gigantic computer . . ." I keep looking, but I cannot find all this in the Scriptures!

Here's Hal Lindsey on the subject: "Someday, a day that only God knows, Jesus Christ is coming to take away all those who believe in Him. He is coming to meet all true believers in the air . . . It will be the living end . . . The ultimate trip . . . These believers will be removed from the earth before the Great Tribulation — before that period of the most ghastly pestilence, bloodshed, and starvation the world has ever known."[1]

THE FALSEHOOD DEFINED

While the premillennialists debate over whether there will be a pre-tribulation or post-tribulation rapture of the church, we need to be showing the whole thing to the world for what it really is — a false and dangerous doctrine. It is false because the Bible does not teach it and dangerous because it leads men away from God's Purpose for the ages. It hints at second chance salvation, but worse than that, it belittles the church by teaching that it is not the Kingdom of God.

Lindsey himself is a "pre-triber" and believes that some who are left behind to face the tribulation will be converted during that period, hence he is also of that school that teaches "second chance salvation."[2] We are not going to deal with all the tenets of the rapture/tribulation debate among millenarians, Lindsey's view is the popular one and we will focus on it. The doctrine involving the rapture and tribulation simply stated says, "The second coming of Christ includes the rapture of the saints during the tribulation on earth, followed by the visible return of Christ with His saints to reign on the earth for a thousand years."[3]

We hasten to point out here that only the so-called "rapture" as espoused by premillennialists is a false doctrine. It is true that the church will be "gathered up" at the second coming of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:23-26; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). The word "rapture" itself does not appear in Scripture, it is an adopted word to explain an unscriptural

teaching. To quote Lindsey, "It is not found in the Bible so there is no need to race for your concordance."[4] Any reliable lexicon will show that *"harpazo"* is the Greek word used by Paul to describe Christ's coming for the church. It conveys the idea of "force suddenly exercised . . . to snatch or catch away."[5] That Christ is coming to "snatch away" the church at the end of the age is certainly taught in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. That this gathering-up will be so that the church may escape a so-called seven year tribulation and that this will be followed by another return of Christ to initiate a thousand year reign on earth is the part denied.

At the time of this supposed "second, second coming," Lindsey has Christ scheduled to end the battle of Armageddon and usher in the millennial era. He says the rapture part that proceeds the tribulation period will be secretive — like a thief in the night. Putting it all together, Lindsey's theory could be called: *The pre-tribulation, secret-rapture, pro-Israel, Dispensational Premillennial Doctrine.*

MILLIONS TO SECRETLY DISAPPEAR

First, let us deal with the so-called "secret" part of this doctrine. Lindsey claims that 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17 clearly teaches that Christ will come undetected and secretly snatch away all of his redeemed.[6] According to these millenarians, the following morning's newspaper will read, *"Extra, Extra, Millions Disappear In The Night . . . Billions of Grave Sites Disturbed . . ."* But a reading of the passage indicates anything but a secretive opera-

tion. There will be "a shout" by the Lord himself, then the "voice of the archangel," followed by the trumpet or "trump of God" blaring. There will be nothing secretive about this event! What Paul is describing in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is the general resurrection, the same one Jesus spoke of in John 5:28,29 wherein "all that are in the graves" shall come forth. So, Paul is not even referring to the first resurrection, but these rapturists must insist that this is only describing the resurrection of the saints because their theory will not allow the wicked out of their graves for another thousand years. It is true that Paul's concern in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is only for the resurrection of the saved, but that does not preclude the fact that the unsaved will also be raised "the same hour" (John 5:28,29; 6:40,44,54).

Concerning Christ's second advent, John assured us that "every eye shall see him" (Revelation 1:7). When the Lord returns the whole human race will have been, or will be at that instant, resurrected to witness this earth-shaking event. It is not going to be like some undercover operation or back door procedure. In another description, Paul said Christ's coming will be accompanied by "flaming fire" at which time he will activate the judgment scene (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). The exact nature of the circumstances of his return cannot be stated, but surely these descriptions indicate anything but a secretive operation. The angels in Acts 1:11 said it will be as obvious as his ascension was, "(he) shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven." The ascension was visible and he plans to

return the same way. If Christ had intended to secretly rapture the saints, which includes the twelve apostles, why did his angels tell them differently?

A TWO-STAGE SECOND COMING

Second, let us deal with the supposed "two-phase second coming" part of this doctrine. Though the Scriptures teach only one second coming, the secret rapture theory requires two, each divided by the supposed seven-year tribulation on earth. Rapturists claim the second coming will simply be a "two-stage" event, but clearly they teach two distinct advents. There is not a shred of Biblical evidence for their second coming for the saints, tribulation on earth, second, second coming sequence. The simple truth is that they have theorized themselves into a corner and are forced to defend an absurdity. Lindsey tries to explain it away by saying only the Christians see him the first time he returns and the whole world will see him return after the millennium.[7] Now when you add them up you get three second comings . . . one for the rapture, one after the tribulation for the millenial reign and one after the millennium. It really gets confusing . . . two resurrections, three second comings and the absurdities are compounded.

The results are that among themselves they debate the "pre-trib versus post-trib" position. One post-tribulation group published this challenge: "We will give $5,000 to anyone finding any Bible passage teaching any rapture or second coming

before the tribulation." Even though the post-trib people are premillennialists, they are at least astute enough not to try to defend any impossible position. There are no Scriptures to support the idea of two distinctly different comings of Christ, yet future. The future advent of our Lord will be a one time occurance (Matthew 25:13, 31; John 14:3; Acts 1:9-11; Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 3:13; 4:16; 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Hebrews 10:37; 1 Timothy 6:13-15; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 1:7; 2:25).

To contend for a "two-stage" return supports the doctrine of "second chance salvation." Rapturists teach that those who have been saved by the gospel of grace will be taken up and during the seven-year tribulation "another gospel," the gospel of the kingdom, will be preached so that during this period many will believe and also be saved. Again we quote Lindsey, "We need to understand that during the seven-year tribulation there will be people who will become believers at that time."[8] Paul said there is only one gospel and those who preach another will be "anathema" (Galatians 1:6-9). Before the elders of Ephesus he made it absolutely clear that the gospel of grace is identical to the gospel of the kingdom (Acts 20:24, 25). The Bible will not support this two-part second coming idea.

THE SEVEN YEAR TRIBULATION

Third, let us deal with the supposed "seven-year tribulation" part of this theory. According to Lindsey this period will be the "time of trouble"

mentioned by Jeremiah, Daniel, Christ, Paul and John.[9] Jeremiah does mention a "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7), but only in connection with the Babylonian Captivity. That mentioned by Daniel referred in substance to the historical period surrounding Antiochus Epiphanes and foreshadowed the destruction of Jerusalem. The tribulation mentioned by Christ in Matthew 24 referred directly to the destruction of Jerusalem and foreshadows the judgment day. His use of the word tribulation in all other places referred to the general persecution of Christians throughout this age. All of Paul's references to tribulation are directed generally to Christians having troubles in the Christian Era. The same is true of John's references to tribulation in the book of Revelation. There is no doctrine called "The Great Tribulation" mentioned in the Bible. There is no time for a seven-year tribulation between the advent of Christ and the end of the world, not to mention another thousand years.

Lindsey's seven-year period is supposedly the last of Daniel's seventy-week prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27). Clearly the seventy-weeks of Daniel's vision were all fulfilled in the Messiah's first coming, the final week (seven years) being accomplished in the ministry of Christ himself and certainly by the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. But the dispensationalists claim that the church age, a "Great parenthesis," lies between the sixth-ninth and seventieth week and they move Daniel's last prophetic week up to the time of the second advent

to become their "seven-year tribulation."

Using the formula that says "seventy weeks" can be interpreted "years" (and we agree they can be), Lindsey believes he can prove the existence of a coming seven-year tribulation. According to Daniel's prophecy, the Jews were given permission to return from captivity to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, and that from the time they were given this permission to the time of the coming of the Messiah would be "seventy weeks" or 490 years. Bible scholars have had a hard time showing just how these 490 years fit in that historical period between the return of the Jews from exile and the first coming of Christ. Lindsey capitalizes on this and declares that it was only 483 years, or sixty-nine weeks, and the last week of seven years is still missing. This becomes the "seven-year tribulation" that is yet to come, and, of course, the Kingdom of God is to be established only after Daniel's seventy weeks are completed. Therefore, says Lindsey, after the coming rapture/tribulation period Christ will return to establish his kingdom and all of this is confirmed and is described in Revelation 4-19.

In refuting Lindsey and his elaborate scheme we must insist that Daniel's seventy weeks need to be considered as a continuous unit. There is absolutely no justification for separating the sixty-ninth from the seventieth week! In fact, the vision itself is given in three periods, each to immediately follow the other. The seven-weeks period ($7 \times 7 = 49$) is followed by a sixty-two weeks period ($62 \times 7 = 434$) and this is followed by a one week period ($1 \times 7 = 7$).

The building of the temple was to take place during the first seven weeks (49 years) and this happened under Zerubbabel's leadership (Ezra 5-6). The vision then indicates that the Messiah will appear after another sixty-two weeks (another 434 years), that is 483 years. Notice that there is no hint of a gap between these two time periods. The vision continues, "And after the threescore and two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off . . . And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week . . ." (Daniel 9:26, 27). This one week (7 years) is in the vision a continuation of the 483 years and there is no reason or logic involved for separating them. While the events that are to happen during this seven years span are in dispute, the fact that all 490 years are a continuous unit cannot be disputed . . . and this is the point that ruins Lindsey's gap theory.

There is nothing in the New Testament that definitely declares the time of the fulfillment of Daniel 9:24-27, but there is enough circumstantial evidence to make us believe the vision was fulfilled in and around the first coming of Christ. There is absolutely no Scriptural justification for the dispensational view that makes the last seven years a time of tribulation at the end of this age. Daniel 9:26, 27 foretells the Messiah's crucifixion which took place in the middle of the seventieth week, or three and one-half years, and the wrath of God that followed in the final destruction of the Jewish economy. In his death Jesus put an end to a need for sacrifice and oblation in the sight of God and in the destruction of Jerusalem with its temple the Roman Army

made sacrifice and oblation impossible. All this fulfilled Daniel 9:24-27.

Did you notice how the fabrication of each false theory made it necessary to create another one? The "secret rapture" and the "great tribulation" forced millenarians to come up with yet another false contention, the "great parenthesis." Once respect for God's Word is forsaken such theories become endless . . . each created to explain a previous one. And none of them are confirmed by what the Bible really teaches. Certainly this seven-year tribulation is not taught in the Scriptures.

THE THEORY EXPLODED

Of course, the whole rapture/tribulation theory is blown apart by the fact that Christ reigns *now* and there will be no thousand year kingdom following the second advent. The church is the kingdom, the "heavenly place" on earth, and Christ is *now* seated on the throne of his Father (Matthew 16:18, 19; Ephesians 1:3; Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 3:21). He has already been placed above all authority and power and the kingdoms of this world are already become the kingdom of our Lord (Ephesians 1:20-23; Revelation 11:15). Paul and John both claimed to be in Christ's Kingdom and looked forward to the consummation of all of God's earthly purposes at the close of this age, not an extended millennium (Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10). Peter confirms that the second coming means the immediate destruction of the earthly order and the beginning of a new heaven and new

earth (2 Peter 3:10-13). Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world . . ." indicating it to be the spiritual body of the saved, the church (John 18:36; Ephesians 5:23). Christ will reign until the end at which time he will deliver up the kingdom, the church, to the Father and the earth will be burned up (1 Corinthians 15:24-28; 2 Peter 3:10).

It should be noted that Christ spoke of only one general resurrection, and not two as proposed by millenarian forces; and, which are absolutely essential to their end of the world theories. Premillennialists must have a resurrection of the righteous (saved) followed a thousand years later by a second resurrection of the wicked (unsaved) in order to squeeze their millennium of peace on earth into the Biblical scheme of things. But notice that Jesus indicated that "all" will be raised at the same time. In John 6:39, 40 he spoke concerning the saved only and said, "I will raise him up at the last day." In John 12:48 he spoke concerning the lost only and said, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." The resurrection and judgment of all will be at the same time, and there is no indication of separate resurrections for the saved and unsaved with a thousand year interval. In Acts 24:15 Paul mentioned that there shall be "a resurrection both of the just and unjust."

Millenarians use 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 as their "proof-text" for their rapture theory. We agree that this passage pertains only to the saints and tells what will happen to them when the Lord comes again. We do not agree that the passage confirms

that the wicked will not be raised until a millennium later, the wicked just are not mentioned at all in this reference. However, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians Paul wrote, "when (adverb of time) he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints" he will at that time render "vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). You see, all that are in the graves will be raised in the same hour (John 5:28,29). There will not be enough time for the rapture/tribulation sequence (Hebrews 9:27). The righteous will not be raised a thousand years before the judgment day, nor will they be rewarded a thousand years before the wicked are punished . . . there will be "a resurrection of the just and the unjust." In light of what the Bible teaches about the end of our age, the rapture/tribulation theory is doomed.

CHAPTER VII

WHAT ABOUT THE PROPHETS?

As we have before stated, premillennialists often twist the Scriptures to suit their own preconceived ideas, and the Old Testament books of prophecy are especially convenient for that sort of thing. For instance, you might be reading a premillennial article and the writer, without validation or proof, might state, "Ezekiel chapters 37, 38 and 39 contain prophecies concerning the rebirth of Modern Israel and the end of our age." Now, whether it's Lindsey or one of the other millennial writers, the average reader thinks the author is a Bible scholar and accepts his interpretation without question. He should demand Scriptural proof from anyone who makes a Bible statement, but the average person is inclined to just believe these millennial advocates, especially if they have produced their theories in book form. The whole thing gets so complicated, the reader finally just throws up his hands and declares, "Well, I guess that's right . . . after all, the man is a Bible scholar and who am I to argue?"

Don't give up! You should argue! Who said these Ezekiel passages pertain to Modern Israel and the end of our age? These passages might pertain to an earlier time. They might be contemporary with Old Testament history more than with our age.

They might have pertained in part to Old Testament times and in part to the New Testament age. Take the premillennialists on and investigate the Bible, yes, even Ezekiel, Daniel and the other prophets, and see for yourself if what those prophets wrote applies to the millennium theory or if the prophets had something else in mind.

VALLEY OF DRY BONES

Lindsey says what Ezekiel saw in his vision of the valley of dry bones which came to life again was a prophecy predicting the rebirth of Modern Israel just prior to the second coming of Christ (Ezekiel 36-39). He says these chapters predict Russia (Gog) and the Communist countries coming against Israel during the battle of Armageddon in the last half of the great tribulation. Just as this Communist Confederacy (Gog and Magog) is about to pounce on Israel, Jesus will arrive with his forces from heaven, defeat Antichrist, the Communist and all his enemies, rescue Israel and set-up his millennial throne in Jerusalem where he will reign for a thousand years. Lindsey suggests that you personally study Ezekiel 36-39, plus a few others prophetic passages, and you will see all of this too.[1] I read them . . . I did not get what Lindsey got out of these passages!

The rebirth of Modern Israel is vitally important to Lindsey's over-all theory, so he really needs this confirmation from Ezekiel as proof that Israel will be re-established in modern times. But what if Ezekiel was not speaking of Modern Israel's rebirth? Then

there will be a huge gap, a missing link, in the millenarian's theory and he will have to find some other passage and say it predicts the rebuilding of Modern Israel. If enough of Lindsey's so-called proof texts are shown to mean other than what he says they mean, then sooner or later he will have to give up premillennialism, or else believe it without having Scriptural basis.

What does the prophet's experience of Ezekiel 36-39 indicate and when and where was it prophetically fulfilled? If we are to take Ezekiel literally, as millennialists suggest, then David, not Christ will be king over the millennium; because, Ezekiel 37:24 reads, "David my servant shall be king over them." Remember, our premillennial friends are literalists, and every word in these chapters of Ezekiel are to be taken literally, just as everything in Revelation 20 is to be taken literally.

Now, if we may understand Ezekiel to be speaking figuratively, then, even though David's name is used, we understand that Christ, who is of David's lineage, is being spoken of here and not David. If we take the reference literally, then we will have Ezekiel contradicting what is plainly taught in the New Testament about the atoning work of Christ. In one of his visions Ezekiel speaks of the temple being rebuilt and of animal sacrifices for sin being re-established (Ezekiel 43:18-27). Bear in mind that Lindsey endorses this as a part of the future milennium on earth under Christ. He believes the temple will be rebuilt and all of its ordinances and sacrifices will be practiced during the millennium.[2] Scofield

tries to smooth this over by suggesting, "these offerings will be memorial, that is, merely commemorative of Christ's great sacrifice at the cross."[3] But Ezekiel says they will be "sin offerings" (Ezekiel 43:19), and that would certainly reflect on Christ! Both Paul and Peter said these carnal ordinances are forever done away with because of Christ's once for all sacrifice for sin on the cross (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 7:27; 9:26; 10:10; 1 Peter 3:18). For the temple to be literally restored with animal sacrifices for sin being observed would be a gross contradiction of what the New Testament teaches about atonement and is certainly a slam at the propitiatory ability of Christ. This would, in effect, say he is not the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

But let us look at Ezekiel 36-39 again, perhaps the prophet is not talking about the rebirth of Modern Israel at all. As originally suggested, he could be referring to an occurrence more contemporary to his own day. The vision of the valley of dry bones being revived was fulfilled when, immediately following the seventy years of Babylonian Captivity, God reinstated Judah, the remnant of a formerly great nation which he purified and humbled by the captivity (Ezra 1). Gog and Magog have symbolic value and stand for all evil forces that oppose God and his people. These same symbols are used in Revelation by John to depict God's enemies. Ezekiel's vision was simply assuring the Jews of that day that God was not going to allow any foe to prevent the reinstallation of their nation following the

Babylonian Exile. Though they would be a subservient and remnant nation, God still intended to fulfill his purposes through them.

Furthermore, the joining of two sticks into one symbolized the fact that after the Exile all Israel, including the ten northern tribes, was restored to the land of promise (Ezekiel 37:21). God made them one nation again (Ezekiel 37:22). Israel never again worshipped idols, they learned their lesson well (Ezekiel 37:23). Through this remnant nation God brought in the Messiah, their real king, and all who receive him are the true children of God (Ezekiel 37:24, 25; John 1:11, 12). Through the Messiah came a new covenant which destroyed the barrier between Jews and Gentiles and placed them all in a covenant relationship with God in one body, the church (Ezekiel 37:26-28; Ephesians 2:11-17).

There is nothing in Ezekiel 36-39 to substantiate the theories of premillennialists; they should look elsewhere for a Scripture prophesying the rebirth of Modern Israel.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

If you have only perused the writings of premillennialists you have probably already discovered that they are sensationalists. In a bookstore I saw this on one of their book jackets: *"The great day of God's wrath is at hand when all hell is turned loose upon the earth! Where will you hide?"* There is certainly nothing wrong with warning the wicked, and every gospel preacher must do so. But the millenarians are warning people about something the

Bible does not even mention.

In his book Lindsey warns mankind about a physical holocaust on earth, which he says is imminent and will take place in our lifetime.[4] He says an European Confederacy will arise, which will be formed from the ten Common Market countries of Modern Europe, plus a westernizing influence from the United States. This Western Confederacy will be the most powerful of three world powers which are to develop just before Armageddon. The other two will be made up of China, Russia and the Communist Bloc Countries.[5] This part of his theory depends primarily on being able to understand that a portion of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2 applies to our time, namely the so-called ten toes.

Let us examine Daniel 2, in its context, and see what is actually taught. Daniel, some six hundred years before Christ, by interpreting the king's dream predicted that God would through his Messiah set up an eternal kingdom (Daniel 2:44). The inference is that as soon as the Messiah appears he will establish this kingdom. There is no hint of a postponement or failure on the part of the Messiah. However, Lindsey and his followers insist that this is exactly what happened. Christ failed to set up God's Kingdom at his first appearance, so he will come again to establish it. Somehow we are assured that even though Jesus failed the first time, he will be successful at his second attempt to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, had a dream in which he saw an image like a man having a

head of gold, shoulders and arms of silver, a mid-section of brass and legs and feet of iron mixed with clay. What could it mean? Daniel, after giving God the credit for interpreting dreams, told the king that each section of the image represented an earthly kingdom; and, that during the time of the Fourth world power God would establish his Messiah and his kingdom. Daniel's own dream recorded in Daniel 7 identifies the four kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar's dream as Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Daniel clearly shows that each of these successive world empires are overlapping and that during the fourth, God would establish a fifth kingdom: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom . . ." (Daniel 2:4). Further, he said this kingdom will be forever, it will never be destroyed. It will not be succeeded by another but will smash and consume all other kingdoms.

The time for the Kingdom of God to be established is precisely shown to be during the fourth world power. The Bible teaches that the church was established in 30 A.D. during Roman dominance, and secular history verifies that Rome faded into ruins by 476 A.D. If the church is God's Kingdom predicted in Daniel 2:44, then the prophecy was fulfilled in Christ's first advent and the entire premise of this part of Lindsey's theory is ruined. If, however, the Kingdom of God is not the church, as Lindsey contends, and is yet to be established on earth, then the extinct Roman Empire will have to be resurrected in modern times and we certainly

should start keeping our eyes glued on the Middle East and the European Common Market.

As you open your New Testament you discover almost immediately that Rome controls the world and you hear John the Baptist preaching "the kingdom is at hand" (Matthew 3:1,2). After John was imprisoned, Jesus and his disciples continued the exact same message, "the kingdom is at hand" (Matthew 4:17; 10:7). Jesus publicly taught, "There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1). Privately, he told the apostles, ". . . upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it . . . And I give unto thee the keys of the kingdom . . ." (Matthew 16:18,19). here he used the words church and kingdom interchangeably, thus confirming that the church is God's Kingdom.

As you turn to the Book of Acts you see the resurrected Christ about to ascend back to heaven, but before doing so he spent added time with the apostles "speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:4). The apostles wanted to know, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). They were told not to question the time, but to wait for the power (Acts 1:7,8). Remember, the kingdom was to come with power (Mark 9:1). The power of the Holy Spirit was given to the apostles on Pentecost and the church was established (Acts 2). Acts 11:15 refers to Pentecost as "the beginning," meaning the beginning of the church. We know that Daniel's prophetic king-

dom had to begin sometime prior to the demise of the Roman Empire in 476 A.D. The church was established in the days of the Roman Empire in 30 A.D. Paul, writing around 60 A.D., said he was in the kingdom (Colossians 1:13). John, writing closer to the turn of the first century, made the same claim (Revelation 1:9).

The evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of the church being the Messianic Kingdom promised in Daniel 2:44. Furthermore, Daniel 2:34,35 pictured "a stone" striking the image "upon his feet that were iron and clay" and completely destroying it. This "stone" was "made without hands," that is, it represented a spiritual being from God, namely Christ, and anyone with a cursory knowledge of history knows Rome fell because of the impact of Christ and his church. The fact that the deity of Christ is the "rock" or stone upon which the church was built lends particular significance to our argument (Matthew 16:18). The image that Nebuchadnezzar saw was struck at the feet where it was most vulnerable and every part of it was completely destroyed.

Yes, but what about the ten toes? Lindsey's theory states that Nebuchadnezzar's image had ten toes which were the only things remaining of the old Roman Empire and they are supposed to develop into the revived Rome so that Daniel 2:44 can be fulfilled upon Christ's return. What ten toes? The number ten is not mentioned by Daniel. When the "stone" struck the feet of the image there was nothing remaining . . . not even one toe (Daniel 2:35,45).

The "stone" not only smashed the ancient empires of men, it also smashes the modern theories of premillennialists.

The premillennial view of God's Kingdom completely overlooks what Jesus said about its nature. In Luke 17:21 he said, "The kingdom of God is within you . . ." In John 18:36 he said, "My kingdom is not of this world . . ." It is spiritual in nature, not earthly. The millenarians cannot use Daniel 2 to prove their theories about the rise of Antichrist and his ten-toed Confederacy, a world holocaust resulting in Armageddon, and the coming of a physical kingdom of God on earth for a millennium. They will have to look elsewhere for their "proof-texts."

A KING OF FIERCE COUNTENANCE

It continues to amaze me how millenarians spice-up their materials . . . one used this heading: *"The World Is Fast Ripening For The Coming World Dictator! The Superman! The Arch-Deceiver! The Anti-Christ!"* According to these fictionalizers, Daniel has much to say about this coming world dictator, the antichrist. All of history's dictators, from Antiochus Epiphanes to Adolf Hitler to Idi Amin, are mere amateurs compared to this arch-villain! Lindsey says he will be a specific personality, presently alive somewhere on the earth right now, who will by deceit and cunning exalt himself to the power of one man rule over all the earth.[6]

Supposedly, the Antichrist's rise to power is described in Daniel 8-11, particularly in Daniel 8:23-25 where Daniel predicted that "in the latter time . . . a

king of fierce countenance" will come to power. He will "stand up against the Prince of princes, but shall be broken without a hand." Daniel 11:21 is supposed to contain more enlightenment by telling us he will come to power during a time of peace and shall "obtain the kingdom by flatteries.'

If it can be shown that Daniel's prophetic villain has already appeared on the stage of history and that Lindsey's "future fueher" is but a fictitious extension of his own speculations, then we will have again achieved our purpose of pointing out the fallacies of dispensational thinking.

The setting for Daniel 8 shows the decline of the Medo/Persian Empire as it gave place to Alexander the Great and the Greeks. After the death of Alexander, the Grecian Empire was divided four ways by his generals, thus creating four smaller kingdoms, and "out of one of them came forth a little horn" (Daniel 8:9). This is not the "little horn" of Daniel 7 which grew out of the ten horns of the Roman Beast, this one grew out of the Grecian Beast. This "little horn" is Antiochus Epiphanes IV. He is interpreted by Daniel to be the one "of fierce countenance" who opposed the very plans of God and was "broken without hand," that is, God brought him down (Daniel 8:23-25).[7]

Antiochus Epiphanes IV died in 165 B.C. and afterward the Jews enjoyed a century of peace and self-rule in Palestine. This period of peace showed God's care and concern for the Jews whom He had chastised by Babylon, Persia and Greece. In 63 B.C. Pompey captured Palestine for the Roman

Empire and this marked the start of God's fulfillment of Daniel 2:44. Rome became the fourth world power, and, as Daniel had foretold from Nebuchadnezzar's dream, during this period the God of heaven would establish his Kingdom.

Paul called it "the fulness of time" and in this space God brought in his Messiah to set up the kingdom (Galatians 4:4). Daniel 8 through 11 makes no mention of an end of the world villain who will rule the earth. Those chapters rather speak of a wicked man named Antiochus Epiphanes who severely persecuted the Jewish people and whom God used at the end of the Jewish age to usher in His divine will for a new age.

Not only is it true that Daniel says nothing about a vile person of our age who shall be "the Antichrist," the New Testament likewise does not teach that there shall arise such a single personality. It does, however, teach that there were at the time it was written, and shall be throughout the age, antichrist elements in the world. In fairness, we should mention that several amillennial commentators (i.e., Hendriksen) do believe that Paul's "man of sin" will be manifested in one person at the close of the age. John is the only New Testament writer who used the term "antichrist" and Paul spoke of the "lawless one" (1 John 2:18; 4:3; 2 John 7; 2 Thessalonians 2: 1-10). Nero, Constantine, Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin and even poor Henry Kissinger are among those who have been suspect, and for various reasons. But those who look for antichrist to appear in a single personality miss the whole point. The spirit of

antichrist is always at work through men and their organizations.

Antichrist, therefore, refers to any figure who puts himself in the place of Jesus Christ. He is a substitute Christ. Standing in the place of Christ, he tries to carry on the Lord's authority. The apostle Paul also declared ". . . the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

The Greek prefix "anti" means "in the place of," and antichrist is any person, organization or system that arises in the Christian Age to oppose the authority of Jesus Christ. The "little horn" of Daniel 8, Antiochus Epiphanes IV, was certainly a prototype of the antichrist spirit. However, nowhere in the Book of Daniel is there a prophecy of an end of the world dictator known as "The Antichrist!" The premillennialists will have to look elsewhere for Scriptural support.

ZECHARIAH'S VISION

Again we want to notice the alarm and sensationalism being forced on us by modern day premillennialists, not to mention their blatant disregard for sound Bible hermeneutics. We would not be offended if they were only teaching mankind to repent in light of God's just condemnation of sin at the end of this age (Acts 17:31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). But their warnings concern something else, something not taught in the Scriptures. Here is a typical headline from one of their papers: *"TIME IS RUNNING OUT! THE MIDNIGHT HOUR IS HERE! JESUS IS COMING SOON! HIS FEET SHALL STAND*

UPON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES AND HE SHALL BE KING OVER ALL THE EARTH."

The last part of this alarming statement is a partial quotation from Zechariah 14:4 and 9, and the entire statement reflects the bias of these futurists. Truly Jesus is coming again and anyone with half a mind knows time is running out (John 14:3; Ephesians 5:16; 1 Peter 4:7). But to assure us that Jesus is coming soon is pure presumptuousness! In Mark 13:33 Jesus said, ". . . for you do not know when the appointed time is." Of course, the millenarians point to their one great piece of evidence, the current return of the Jews to their homeland, and there they take their stand. Lindsey firmly holds that the next great event in human history will happen in this generation and will be the personal return of Jesus Christ to catch away (Rapture) His Church. This, he says, will signal the beginning of the great trouble (Tribulation), a seven year period resembling a third world war. At the close of this period Jesus will return for a great blood-bath (Armageddon) and then "His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives" as Zechariah 14:4 supposedly predicts.[8]

Now again, if an investigation of Zechariah 14 reveals that the passage has nothing to do with the end of the world events, then we shall have punctured the premillennial scheme again! Even if we cast doubt on the validity of applying a literal interpretation to this passage we shall have cast doubt on the premillennialist's application of it. Again we make the point that the premillennials have difficulty in allowing God the use of figurative lan-

guage. They always want to take every Scripture literally. So, they contend that Zechariah 14 is describing a literal earthly kingdom with its headquarters in Jerusalem, in which the Jews, with Jesus as king, will rule the world for a thousand years.

From an article by Wayne Jackson entitled, *"Dispensationalism and Zechariah 14,"* we have gleaned some interesting points for Lindsey and others who insist on a literal interpretation of the passage.

(1) How would one determine that this is a prophecy of an alleged millennial reign of Christ on earth? Did Christ, during His earthly ministry, so interpret it? Did any divinely inspired New Testament writer ever quote Zechariah 14 with a "dispensational" application? Absolutely not! There is not a speck of evidence that would point this prophecy in the direction of premillennialism. If there is, premillennialists are obligated to produce it . . .

(2) A basic problem with premillennialists is their inability to discern the difference between the literal and figurative elements of the Scriptures. Those who fail to note that much of the prophecy of the Old Testament is couched in figurative terminology are destined to fail in their attempts to understand the Bible . . .

(3) If Zechariah 14:4 refers to the literal return of Christ (i.e., the Second Coming) upon the mount of Olives, exactly who is it that will make that escape flight to the east in the cleft of that mountain? Certainly not the wicked for the Bible plainly teaches that they will be destroyed when the Lord returns (Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9), and

surely not the righteous for they shall be "caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). And who else is left?

(4) Verse 8 speaks of living waters going forth from Jerusalem in summer and in winter. Since summer and winter will occur only as long as the earth remains (Genesis 8:22), and as the earth will not remain beyond the coming of Christ (2 Peter 3:4,10), it is obvious that the events of this verse cannot transpire after the literal return of Jesus which supposedly is alluded to in verse 4.

(5) Verse 12 tells of Jehovah smiting His enemies and their "flesh" being consumed. Again, this cannot possibly refer to a period after the literal return of Christ; the Coming of Christ will signal the end. The dead will be raised and the living, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, will be changed from flesh ("this corruptible" or "this mortal") to incorruption and immortality (1 Corinthians 15:23,24, 51-53).

(6) The premillennial view of Zechariah 14 strikes at the very heart of the abiding nature of Jesus' work at Calvary. Verses 16 and 21 speak of those who go up to observe the feast of tabernacles and who make sacrifice. Again the dispensationalists literalize and assert that Judaism, with all its carnality and animal blood, will be revived in the millennium.[9]

Homer Hailey, in his scholarly treatment of Zechariah 14 says, "The more probable explanation is that the Lord is here pointing to the spiritual Jerusalem as the capital of His spiritual kingdom (cf. Hebrews 12:22; Galatians 4:26) and of the assault upon it by the world."[10]

Sufficient evidence has been given here to render serious, in fact, we think fatal, damage to the interpretation placed on the passage by premillennialists. They will have to look elsewhere for Biblical support of their theories.

JESUS' OLIVET DISCOURSE

Lindsey delights in pointing to the achievements of the modern State of Israel as exhibit A for his case. Some of our representatives in the United States Congress hold to his views and every time a piece of pro-Israel legislation comes before them they vote affirmative. They want to send Israel ships, planes, tanks, guns and bombs . . . to help God's future plans. After all, they are on God's side and want to do their part to help bring in His Kingdom. As we said in Chapter V, we do not doubt their sincerity, but we have serious misgivings about their view of the nature of God's Kingdom. They remind us of those nationalistic Jews of Jesus' day who wanted to take the kingdom "by force" (Matthew 11:12). There is little difference between those nationalistic, material-minded Jews who wanted Jesus to set up a physical, political government on earth and the premillennialists today . . . both parties are materialists and nationalists. Jesus' answer to the Jews who wanted to make Him an earthly king over a physical kingdom was an emphatic "no"! (John 6:15). He told them, "My Kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Millenarians need to realize that Christ's Kingdom is spiritual in nature, not physical (Luke 17:21; Colossians 1:27).

Pointing to Modern Israel, the premillennialists declare, "The age of the Gentiles is closing." They, of course, see the last nineteen hundred years as "the age of the Gentiles" spoken of by Jesus in Luke's account of the Olivet Discourse (Luke 21:24). "The age of the Gentiles," we believe, was that span of time between Nebuchadnezzar's siege of the Jewish People in 606 B.C. and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. by Roman forces. But premillennialists see it as that period of time covering the entire Christian or Church Age. They argue that the Jews, being away from their homeland for these past nineteen hundred years, have started to resettle there . . . so we have a definite sign that the end of our age is nearing.

In Chapter V we spoke of the 1917 Balfour Declaration giving modern Jews back a portion of the land that belonged to them in Bible times. Also, in 1922 the League of Nations gave Great Britain power over Palestine. On May 14, 1948, Great Britain withdrew its claim and Israel became a modern state. All of this is supposedly a fulfilling of what Jesus predicted in Luke 21:14-17. He said the Jews and their beloved city "shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). The millenarians say this means that the Jews will be scattered among the nations and Jerusalem will lay wasted until sometime close to the Second Coming when the Jews will re-establish their nation and rebuild Jerusalem with its temple. It's little wonder why the millenarians get all excited over the occurrences in

the Middle East these days, they believe they are seeing the fulfilling of prophecy before their very eyes.[11] But, are they correct? If the context of Luke 21 does not confirm what they claim then the entire premillennial theory is discredited.

Luke 21:5-36 correlates with Matthew 24:1-44 and Mark 13:1-37 and contains a discourse Jesus gave to His disciples just prior to His death. They had asked about the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the end of the age . . . a two-part question. Relative to the first part He said, "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14; cf. Mark 13:10). Everything in Matthew 24:2-35 pertains to the first part of the question about the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. So, "then will the end come" relates to Roman purge of Jewery in 70 A.D. In Romans 11:25 Paul speaks of "the fulness of the Gentiles" in connection with his plea for Israel. His statement has a relationship to Jesus' remarks in Luke 21:24-27, "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled . . . And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

Jesus' words here pertain to the question about the disposition of Jerusalem, as does Matthew 24:14 where He said the "gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world . . . and then the end will come." Paul often spoke of the

urgency of preaching the gospel to the whole Roman (Gentile) world and felt a personal burden about it (1 Corinthians 9:16,23; Romans 15:18-20). He realized that "the fulness of the Gentiles" or "times of the Gentiles" being fulfilled would be commensurate with the proclamation of the gospel to the whole world. In two of his letters written prior to 70 A.D. (he died prior to this date) Paul proclaimed the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24:14 (Romans 10:18; Colossians 1:23). In 70 A.D. Jerusalem was demolished by Titus and the Roman Army (Gentiles). The imagery Jesus used in Luke 21:24-27 to describe the distress, perplexity and awfulness of Jerusalem's destruction relates to what Matthew recorded Him saying, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21). The historian, Josephus, relates vividly the awful fall of Jerusalem to the Roman forces, and the misery that accompanied that fall.

The "times of the Gentiles" was fulfilled historically in 70 A.D. when a Gentile army leveled Jerusalem and destroyed Judaism forever. And, this is what Jesus was talking about in Luke 21:24-27. The premillennialists cannot use Jesus' prophecies of the Olivet Discourse to prove modern Israel is the fulfillment of God's plans. They will have to look elsewhere for Scriptural support.

In fact, none of the prophecies of the Old or New Testament confirm what Lindsey teaches. In this chapter we have only looked at some of the prophecies millenarians try to use, and we have pointed

out their misapplications of these prophecies. The same point can be made with regard to every prophetic portion of the Bible, premillennialists uniformly misuse them.

CHAPTER VIII

WHAT ABOUT THE SIGNS?

Perhaps every generation views its own moral decadance as a possible sign of the end. There are many who sincerely feel that we are living in a generation that will witness the end, but many living in 1000 A.D. felt the same way. Jesus taught that his return will occur when the world is as immoral as in Noah's day or Lot's day (Matthew 24:36-41; Luke 17:28-30). Newsweek Magazine recently reported some shocking facts about the moral climate in the United States today, but who can judge whether these conditions rival those in Noah or Lot's day? Here are some facts from that report:

(1) Over one million babies are born out of wedlock each year, most involving teenage mothers.

(2) One out of every five high school students will contact venereal disease before graduation. VD is at epidemic proportion.

(3) Fornication and adultery are accepted as social norms. Living together is not a fad, but rather a life style.

(4) Abortion has become a common practice and is not viewed as murder by most of those polled. It is defended as a civil right of the in-

dividual, that is, the right of the mother at the expense of the unborn infant.

(5) Homosexuality is widely practiced and even condoned as an alternate life style.

(6) Divorce is so common that better than one out of four marriages end this way — thirty-eight percent is the national average.

Some argue that the number of those trying to do right is proportionately more today than in Noah's day, so we may not be close to the end. But Jesus was not referring to the proportions of righteous and evil doers in Matthew 24, he was referring to the rampant excesses of evil in the world of Noah's day. The question remains, is the world today as evil as it was in Noah's time?

Not since the days of Sodom and Gomorrah has sexual perversion reached the proportions of our times. Homosexuality is defended as an enlightened way of life. The careful student of history will note that it is the one sin that marks the down-fall of all great civilizations. According to Jesus in Luke 17:28-30 it will also mark that generation that will be living when he returns. There are signs to suggest that Jesus could return in our time and this writer knows of no Scripture that would prohibit that from happening. In Matthew 16:2,3 Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for not discerning the signs of the times. Paul said, "Ye brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thessalonians 5:4,5). The Hebrew writer encourages us to exhort each other and all the more as we "see the

day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). We are to discern the times, but we must be especially careful not to use this as a license to theorize.

THE PROPHECY PEDDLERS

There is a world of difference in patiently waiting upon the Lord and carefully reading the signs of the times, and promoting dooms-day theories and elaborate dating systems for profit. The March 5, 1979 issue of Time Magazine reports on *"THE DELUGE OF DISASTERMANIA"* so prevalent in the last few years using none other than Hal Lindsey as their subject matter. Lindsey is simply the front-runner, the number of those pushing end of the world theories like his are legion. In the words of Lindsey, "The future is big business."[1] One prophecy peddler got so caught up in the current excitement over the signs of the times he said, "The Lord's return is so near that I am no longer looking for signs . . . I'm listening for sounds." Lindsey adds, "History seems to be headed for its climactic hour."[2] Another said, "The smell of fulfillment is in the air." (It might be interesting to know where he was when he said that!)

Many today are so prolific in declaring the signs of Christ's return it is impossible not to be suspicious of their motives. Their total emphasis is on the earthly purpose for which they think he is coming. I get the impression their interest is more in the millennial kingdom's power than in seeing Jesus face to face! They duplicate the interest of the Jews when Jesus came the first time. All they could think about

was a material kingdom that would benefit them. Judas wanted to handle the money and even James and John requested positions on either side of his throne. All these modern millennialists seem to be jockeying for power and position in their great anticipation of an earthly kingdom.

Hence, the weekly news is interpreted in their publications in light of its "eschatological significance." The Common Market is shaping up to revive the ancient Roman Empire, so that must mean that Antichrist is alive somewhere in Europe right now . . . and on it goes. Remember what Lindsey said, "Keep your eyes on the Middle East."[3]

MILLENNIUM MANIA

It's true, everyone is interested in the future. The reason is perhaps because the future always holds greater promises than the present. Something tells us we have so ruined the earth by our sin and selfishness that our future existence here is threatened. Those who, in spite of it all, love this world and dread the thought of giving it up find it very easy to pick up on the millennial program. The doctrine declares that they can have their beloved earth, and renovated at that, for an extended one thousand years. So what we are witnessing is a kind of millennium mania because people are extremely anxious about what the future holds. As far as what the Bible teaches about the future, there is more confusion than understanding . . . by far!

Another reason why people are so interested in the future might be because the American dream

which rested on the theory that material abundance would give automatic happiness is a failure. It is now painfully clear that our affluence will never satisfy our greatest dreams. A society in despair has no place to turn but the future. If only people could see that real happiness is found only when one lives as a Christian in daily preparation for meeting Christ according to his purposes and timetable. Modern millennialism has become just another way by which man tries to control his own future. Jesus taught us to live peaceful lives free of speculation and sensationalism. He said, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh" (Matthew 24:44).

The Thessalonian Brethren expected Christ to return in their day, but Paul told them "that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first . . ." (2 Thessalonians 2:2). That "falling away" is at this point a historical reality. Everything seems primed for the second coming. There are signs that the end could be nearing, but beware, no one knows for sure (Mark 13:33).

THE PROBLEM OF INDIFFERENCE

Equally as dangerous as becoming mixed up in millennium mania is the problem of becoming indifferent to the whole subject. It seems to be the nature of premillennials to be offensive and amillennials to be passive. If this is true, then I also think it's sad. Amillennials really have more positive good news for the world than do the premillennials. Amillennials can teach people to believe and obey Jesus

so that when he comes again they can go to heaven forever. Premillennials must explain all the doom and gloom that go with their theories.

But what makes it even more important that we not become indifferent to the second coming theme is this current proliferation of premillennial doctrines. They must be answered soundly by the Scriptures. Jesus promised, "I will come again . . . that where I am there you may be also . . ." (John 14:1-6). Our hope is not invested in an earthly kingdom, but rather a heavenly home. These nationalistic, dispensational premillennial theories can be met and exposed by the Scriptures, and may God give us men who know the Word well enough to do exactly that! Jim McGuiggan's *"THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE PLANET EARTH"* is one good example of the kind of material I am suggesting we need to produce to meet the millenarian's offensive. In 1931 Brother Foy Wallace strongly defeated premillennial forces that threatened the New Testament Church, but that was a generation ago. Today there is a new offensive with a different brand of the doctrine and a correct presentation of God's Truth must be made available to this generation.

So for those who think this false doctrine was put to rest by those who went before us, you need to know it's not so . . . second coming fever is with us again. In fact, premillennialism was one of the first apostate doctrines of the Christian Age.[4] It raised its ugly head a number of times over these last nineteen centuries, but it has never been more rampant than it is today. The idea is more entrenched in the-

ology than ever before. The attitude "ignore it and it will go away" has never been an effective method for combating error, and we are certain the currently renewed interest in millennialism will not disappear of itself. It represents materialism to the core! It is identical to the nationalistic, materialistic concept of the kingdom that caused the crucifixion of Christ.

At a time like this, indifference must not characterize those who believe what the Bible really teaches about last things. We must be militant when it is called for (Philippians 1:16). We simply must not stand by and do nothing while false teachers mislead honest people relative to God's Kingdom and future plans.

Incidentally, the influencial Dallas Theological Seminary where Hal Lindsey was trained and John F. Walvoord is president is the world's "hotbed" for the theory. Virtually tons of materials teaching dispensational premillennialism come from there each year, and is spread to all parts of the world in many languages. For those who maintain that it makes little or no difference what position one holds regarding the millennium, we quote both Lindsey and Walvoord: Lindsey writes, "To us (premillennialists) the biggest issue is over the question 'Does God keep his promises?' " Walvoord writes, "It is inevitable that defense of premillennialism becomes a defense of the Bible itself . . ."[6] The "gurus" of dispensationalism say, "It makes a difference." They are anything but indifferent — in fact, they are militant in promoting their views as the truth of God's

Word.

THE PROBLEM OF SENSATIONALISM

If indifference has been the amillennialist's mistake, then certainly sensationalism has been the premillennialist's abuse. With them Armageddon is always upon us and every prominent personality in the news is investigated as the possible Antichrist. The mark of the beast is seen on institutions, corporations and governments everywhere and huge lists of signs of the last days are always being published. They say the knowledge explosion of the 1960s and 70s is a sign of the imminent return of Christ. And, of course, the rebirth of the nation of Israel is an even greater sign. The moral corruption of our day is another . . . their sensationalism may well be their down-fall!

Again, there is no denying that things like increased knowledge and rampant immorality may be indicative that the end is near, but to sensationalize and say these times are the closing days, hours and minutes is going too far. All we really know is what could happen, but specific information about the return of Christ is limited to the mind of God. We know that it is a fact he will return, but it's still going to be like a thief in the night (John 14:3; 2 Peter 3:10).

Lindsey and his friends see anything they want to see in the Scriptures. As we saw in chapter III, it has to go with their system of interpretation. One claimed that Nahum, when he wrote, "The chariots shall rage in the streets . . ." was predicting the

modern automobile (Nahum 2:3,4). This is definitely not an application of the literal method of interpretation! Another said Isaiah predicted the airplane when he wrote, "As birds flying so will the Lord defend Jerusalem . . ." (Isaiah 31:5). Yet another said Amos predicted the submarine when he wrote, "Though they hide themselves in the bottom of the sea . . ." (Amos 9:3). One said Solomon predicted the radio when he wrote, ". . . a bird of the air shall carry the voice . . ." (Ecclesiastes 10:20). There seems to be no limit to their sensationalism.

It is amazing to realize that there are actually millions who truly believe that Lindsey and these others can define the future and interpret prophecy so clearly. Some of these prophetic musings are getting beyond ridiculous! One millennialist, playing up the theme that Christ was the Lamb in his first advent and will not be the Conquering Lion until his second coming, went on tour in 1974 with a sermon entitled: *"The Lion May Roar In '74."* (Of course, Jesus became both Lamb and Lion in his first advent!) Well, that sermon obviously did not *"Survive In '75,"* but the millenarians were *"Up To The Same Old Tricks in '76."* They were looking to be *"Raptured to Heaven in '77"* and *" '78 It Was Getting Late."* So, here we are in *" '79, And Its More of The Same Old Line!"* (So much for the poetry).

One premillennial enthusiast, standing at the gates of the world famous Forest Lawn Cemetery in Southern California, described for a friend what the place will look like when Jesus raises the dead. "Why," he said, "this place will look like a plowed

field . . . the tombstones will be all askew." If he knows that much detail about end events, then he knows more than the Bible tells. Such detailing is sheer speculating and represents the very heart and mentality of modern premillennialism. We know the hour is coming when all who are in the grave will be resurrected, but who feels qualified to describe all the details?

Walvoord himself admits embarrassment over the amount of sepculating being done by his cohorts. He admits that some went too far in declaring that at one time materials for constructing a new temple in Jerusalem were secretly being manufactured. He makes the excuse that they were just over-zealous believers. He admits that in the past his fellow-millenarians spotted Mussolini, Hitler and others as arch-villain of Christ and saw both world wars as the end of the age. He agrees that such speculating has now been proven wrong.[7] But still he and his colleagues continue to do it!

We do not want to be unkind, but one gets tired of this constant sensationalism and showmanship from those recognized as religious leaders. Billy Graham has joined these millennial forces within the last two decades in a stronger way. He dedicates at least one night of every "Billy Graham Crusade" to some theme that stresses the imminent return of Christ for an earthly purpose.

Have you noticed that no one discusses good old fashioned Calvinism anymore? It isn't relevant, I guess. "But tell me," they say, "are you a pre-trib, or a post-trib? And how do you stand on the rapture

issue? Are you a secret-rapture, pre-tribulation, pro-Israel, dispensational premillennialist?" Millennialism is getting to be like the ice cream business, it comes in about thirty-one different flavors!

In some religious circles, if you do not hold to some tenet of the doctrine you are looked upon with pity for your lack of insight. Where people view being in a church like being in a club, and naturally everyone wants acceptance and to be "on the inside," they have accepted the millennial doctrines without question. They have very little Bible knowledge about the subject, but their reaction when they find out that you are amillennial is always, "You mean you don't believe in the millennium? Our pastor does . . . and all of our finest Bible scholars do . . . so why don't you?"

The really sad part of it all is that sincere people are accepting a teaching that is inconsistent with God's Word. The fault lies with both the false teachers and the people. Hopefully, as speculations increase and the sensationalism gets wilder, people will begin to recognize that millennialism is out of control and has no Scriptural foundation. Let us hope so!

THE IMMINENCE FACTOR

We have already seen how Lindsey, Walvoord and others teach that this generation will witness the second coming. This imminence factor is a vital ingredient for the popularity they enjoy. If what Lindsey predicts was aimed at three or four generations in the future, then his books would be less

popular than a mudslide. In brief, he maintains that a generation is forty years and Israel (the fig tree referred to in Matthew 24:32) became a nation in 1948. So 1948 plus forty equals 1988. This would mean his secret rapture should occur in 1981.[8] To show the influence being wielded by Lindsey's theory, *Christianity Today Magazine* in October, 1976 seriously proposed this question: "Will an evangelical President usher in the Millennium?" The author answered "surely not," but even the posing of the question demonstrates how widespread this imminence teaching has become.

After making a "big-to-do" about those who have discredited Bible study by "unscriptural attempts at calculating dates," Lindsey begins building a case for his own second coming prediction.[9] By the time he finishes chapter four of *"LATE GREAT PLANET EARTH,"* he's ready to predict that the end will come "within forty years or so of 1948."[10] The point is, without this imminence ingredient his book would never have sold as well as it did. People are interested in knowing about their own generation's future (they think!), and this is the one factor, besides its materialistic appeal, that gives so much popularity to Lindsey's brand of premillennialism today.

Today's faithful believer needs to realize that "watchfulness" is the work we have been given to do, and that has very little to do with cloud-studies, star-gazing or date-setting. Jesus said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only . . . therefore be ye

ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh" (Matthew 24:36,44). In the same context Mark recorded Jesus saying, "And what I say unto you I say unto all, *watch*" (Mark 13:37). When Jesus had finished his work on earth and was ascending back to heaven in a cloud, his disciples stood watching. There were two angels there and they reprimanded them by saying, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Those disciples returned to Jerusalem and ten days later received the promised power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). They went to work and "turned the world upside down" for Christ (Acts 17:6). Before his life ended the Apostle Paul could record that the gospel had been preached to the whole Roman World (Romans 10:18; Colossians 1:23).

The conclusion is obvious, no man knows anything about the time of Christ's return and only the most presumptuous of our race would claim to know anything about it. However, we do know what our work is until he comes . . . so let us be about our

THE DATING GAME

We must give Lindsey and his colleagues some credit . . . they do agree that caution is necessary when dealing with dates. Walvoord writes, "While most of us hesitate to set dates, there has never been more evidence in support of the concept that

we are nearing the end."[11] But *Newsweek Magazine* of January 10, 1977 reports that these "latter-day prophets" are being anything but hesitant in proclaiming end of the world dates to the public. Walvoord says they are being hesitant, but the evidence says they are in fact accelerating their date-setting practices.

It is said that at the close of the first millennium of the Christian Age, Europe was besieged by "end of the world" mystics. Even Augustine said he thought the world might end in 1000 A.D. It seemed likely that it might, and Revelation 20 did say something about a thousand years, so the prognosticators had people selling their possessions and fainting at the slightest sound of thunder. The Catholic Church cleaned up by having wealthy landlords all over Europe deed their holding to the church in exchange for pardon of their sins. The Black Death that invaded Europe was declared to be a sure sign that the end was near. Just as today, some back then found out there is money to be made in the prognosticating business.

In the nineteenth century there was another burst of eschatological interest when men like William Miller and others began prophesying that Jesus would return soon. In 1832 Miller preached, "And so, brethren, it has been revealed to me that the world is coming to an end. Repent, repent, I say, for you have but eleven years to be washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. In mighty fire and terror the world will end in 1843." By 1843 his followers were so hopeful, many of them abandoned their farms,

businesses and homes as they banded together in prayer sessions waiting for the last trump. In Westford, Massachusetts, about 500 gathered, all wearing white robes, to wait for the coming. When the midnight hour of December 31, 1842 arrived, an old town drunk, known as "Crazy Amos," blew a trumpet outside an old mansion where many of these devotees were gathered. Pandemonium broke loose, and several were seriously injured in their effort to get out of the house. Outside they found not Jesus, but a bleary-eyed, laughing old drunkard.

Another story from that era tells of one lady of means who was so convinced that Miller was right she moved to Palestine and established residence on the Mount of Olives. She kept two beautiful white Arabian horses in stables there. One was for Jesus to ride and presumably the other was for her!

Miller calculated his date of 1843 by using the "2,300 days" of Daniel 8:14, and counting from 457 B.C. Needless to say Jesus did not return in 1843. Miller came back and announced to his followers that he had made a small miscalculation — by one year — Christ would come in 1844. Again he was wrong, but the movement he began continued somehow. There followed from this movement a group called "The Millennial Dawns." This group later predicted that the age would end in 1914, but it didn't and today they thrive under the name, "Jehovah Witnesses." Other Millerites became "The Seventh-Day Adventists." It is sad to note that all four of the major cults of today sprang from these speculations of the nineteenth century — The

Jehovah Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, Mormons, and Christian Scientists.

Many people are not aware of the fact that the Jehovah Witnesses have made three attempts to name the date of the second coming — 1914, 1947 and 1973. Three misses and they continue to be one of the fastest growing organizations in the religious world. It only proves that Lindsey will also be forgiven if the rapture fails to occur by 1981 and the end of the age by 1988. A very astute book publisher is reported to have said to an upstart prophecy writer, "Look, if you want to write a best seller in the field of prophecy, name the Antichrist and set a date." So the game continues to be played.

CHAPTER IX

WHAT'S REALLY GOING TO HAPPEN?

We have strongly contended throughout this book that a study of the second coming and end of the world events should not be ignored by those of the amillennial persuasion . . . there is power and faith to be found in such an effort. If importance of a subject can be measured by the number of times it is alluded to in the Scriptures, then few subjects are more vital than the second coming of Jesus Christ. We repeat that everything appears ready for that great event and this writer knows of nothing that would prevent Jesus from coming in this generation if he so chooses. Our criticism of the prophecy buffs and their theories and time-tables should not be misunderstood. They are criticized because of their inconsistencies with the truth of God's Word which are causing people to be misled and possibly lost. They are not criticized because of their longings for Jesus' return, that should be the attitude of every believer (Revelation 22:20).

The Bible definitely teaches that Christ will appear a second time (Hebrews 9:28). This doctrine is basic to Christianity. In fact, it gives credibility to Christianity as the only true religion. No other world religion maintains the hope of its founder's return. Christians indeed cherish his promise to

return. The same Bible that historically proves that Jesus came once is replete with the promise of his second appearance.

A VITAL SUBJECT

The second coming is mentioned over 300 times in 260 chapters of the New Testament (i.e., 2 Thessalonians 1:7). Jesus referred to his return approximately 20 times in the four gospels (i.e., John 14:3). There is more said about the second coming than about baptism, the Lord's Supper and many other cardinal doctrines. Paul speaks to all in the Christian Age as being those "upon whom the end of the world is come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). While that statement applies to the entire Christian Age, it specifically speaks to an exact generation of people and that might well be us.

The term "the second coming" is perhaps the most frequently used expression regarding end of the world events. It quite obviously holds different meanings to different people . . . depending on their eschalogical viewpoint. It doubtless will surprise many that the exact expression, "the second coming" is not found in Scripture. However, the Hebrew writer comes close with "(Christ) shall appear a second time . . ." (Hebrews 9:28). While the greater portion of the New Testament (particularly the four gospels) concerns Christ's first advent, the dedicated Bible student soon becomes keenly aware that his second advent is also pre-eminently mentioned.

Most conservative, evangelical groups still believe in the second coming of Christ, while more and

more of those in the mainstream of liberal Protestantism dismiss the idea saying it is a metaphor depicting God's power over evil . . . or something like that. Roman Catholics still hold to their traditional position of a literal return, however, they are presently being influenced by dispensational views. Catholicism has so many "here and now" problems it hardly finds time to be concerned with eschatology. Augustine's amillennial views are still generally accepted by conservative elements within the Catholic Church.

The problem is not just that some do and many do not believe in the second coming of Christ, it's not that simple. The real problem concerns *what* is believed about his return by the world of Christendom in general. And because of the abundance of conflicting viewpoints, there is rampant confusion in all conservative, evangelical groups and an attitude of mistrust and doubt among the liberals. Those believing in a literal second coming are divided into the various millennium camps, basically post, pre and amillennial, and these have so subdivided themselves that we can only expect more confusion to ensue. That is, unless men are willing to put away their theories and preconceived views and return only to the Bible for enlightenment concerning what the future holds. As we saw in an earlier chapter, the problem also becomes one of Biblical interpretation . . . it's not that millenarians will not accept the Bible, it's a matter of them understanding it to suit themselves.

JESUS HIMSELF SHALL APPEAR

Paul declared, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven . . ." (1 Thessalonians 4:16). The assurance is that Jesus himself and not a representative will appear again to us. Not Gabriel, Michael or some heavenly substitute, but our eyes will behold the august presence of the one who died for us. Every person who has ever lived on planet earth will see his glory, even those denied eyesight while in the flesh (Revelation 1:7). Every deceased person from Adam to the more than 100,000 who will die today will be resurrected, and every individual yet alive at his coming will be present to witness his appearing (Acts 1:11; John 5:28,29; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17).

Luke records the historical fact that Jesus was "taken up" in a cloud and quotes angels saying,"... this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11). He will come on the clouds of glory and every eye shall witness it, including those who killed him (Matthew 26:64; Revelation 1:7).

Of all the promises Jesus made he chose the promise of his return with which to close the New Testament. Next to the last verse in the Bible John says, "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20). Over and over Jesus promised to return, his most direct statement being, "I will come again" (John 14:3). Also notable are statements from the pen of Paul like, "When Christ, who

is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:4). Peter, John and the other New Testament writers are equally assuring (i.e., 1 John 3:2; 1 Peter 5:4; James 5:7; Luke 18:8; Jude 14, 15).

Christ will return! As sure as he went up . . . he will come again! What will it be like? Having established the fact of his coming again, we now proceed to a discussion of *HOW* and *WHY*.

THE MANNER OF HIS COMING

The return of Christ is going to be a personal, visible, world-wide appearance, completely the opposite of his first advent as a helpless babe in an animal shelter.

In describing the Lord's judgment as it would come on Jerusalem just forty years after his death, Jesus said, "For as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming of the Son of man" (Matthew 24:27). In principle and type this describes the manner of his second coming in judgment as well. Paul said the last trumpet shall sound "in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:52).

There will be no advance warning to give people time and opportunity to get ready. The parable of the Ten Virgins teaches us that the wise are always prepared to meet the bridegroom (Matthew 25:1-13). Christ's sudden return will then produce a two-fold effect on the world — the blood washed righteous will rejoice and the unprepared will face the realities of being lost (Matthew 25:34,41).

Now, there is a paradox involved here. While his return is said to be seen by all, it is also compared to a thief in the night. This illustration is used, not to teach that his return will be secretive, but rather unexpected.

A thief strikes when we least expect it and so the Bible is warning that the world will be off-guard. Our pleasure mad society will be spiritually asleep. So Paul wrote, ". . . the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2). Peter said, ". . . the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (2 Peter 3:10). The Lord himself said, ". . . if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Luke 12:39,40).

THE PURPOSE OF HIS COMING

Because our salvation was only begun by Christ's first coming, those who are justified and sanctified by his death will at his second coming finally be claimed (Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 3:2). The difference in the two advents is seen in the difference between Bethlehem and the New Jerusalem. In his first advent Christ "put away sin" by the sacrifice of his own body. That coming was not to condemn, but to save the world (John 3:16,17). In his second coming he will "appear without sin unto salvation," that is, having given himself to redeem men from the sin problem, he will gather the fruits of his effort. So, the purpose of his second advent will be to reap the

harvest sown in his first.

In relating the place and value that God has placed upon the church, Paul called her the Bride of Christ. Paul related that in his first coming Christ "gave himself" for his bride (Ephesians 5:25-27). In his second advent he will be returning to claim her forever (Revelation 21:2,9). As a wedding garment for the occasion she will be wearing the righteousness of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). When he comes for her, he will take her up to be where he is now and she shall ever be with him (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

The church is the only thing Christ intends to rescue out of this material world, and it by nature is a spiritual kingdom, all material substances will be burned up (John 18:36; 2 Peter 3:10).

The Bible teaches that at Christ's return he will render up his kingdom, the church, to the Father and that will mark the end of time as we know it. "Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death" (1 Corinthians 15:24-26). You will notice that "the end" is "when" he will deliver up the kingdom. That the kingdom is not still a future promise, but was established at Christ's first coming and is interchangeable with the word church is clearly implied and is definitely seen in Matthew 16:13-19. The scene took place prior to his death and Jesus promised, "I will build my church" (verse

18), and speaking of the same institution, he went on in the same context to call it "the kingdom" (verse 19). The kingdom was to "come with power (Mark 9:1) and that occurred on the first Pentecost after Christ's resurrection when the church was established (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, 47).

Further, the Bible teaches that Christ's return will mark the resurrection of *ALL* the dead. The millennial program calls for two resurrections, one for the dead saints and one a thousand years later for the rest of the dead. Jesus taught, "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in the which *ALL* that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28,29). This speaks of one resurrection, not two with a thousand year interval. Hear Paul declare before Felix, ". . . there shall be *a resurrection* of both the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15). Jesus taught that all believers will be rewarded "in the last day," (John 6:40) and that those who reject his word will likewise be judged at that same time, "in the last day" (John 12:48).

According to the Bible, Christ's return will mark the time of the judgment of mankind . . . not the beginning of another thousand years! Jesus said, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and *then* shall he render unto every man according to his deeds" (Matthew 16:27). Again he said, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and

sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, *when he cometh* in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

It is easy to see that there are sharp differences between the Bible's schedule for the second coming and the one on the millenarian's agenda. There will be no millennium following this age, but rather the Bible teaches:

(1) The Lord will come again.
(2) The dead will be raised in that day.
(3) All men will be judged in that day.
(4) The righteous will go into eternal life.
(5) The wicked will go into eternal punishment.

We plead with religious people, and especially with religious leaders and teachers, to be level-headed about this subject of last things. We plead with you to leave speculations out and to abide only by what the Scriptures teach us about the end times.

APPENDIX A

UNDERSTANDING THE REVELATION OF JOHN

John Waddey

No grander book confronts the Bible student than the Revelation of John. Students of this most challenging book are fully aware of the problems of interpretation it holds. Without a system of interpretation by which to approach the book, one will surely flounder in his attempt. Many interpreters reach faulty conclusions as to the predictions of the book because they tackle the symbolic visions apart from a sound method by which to decipher the whole book. Herewith are some useful principles of interpretation that will greatly assist the serious student.

1. In seeking to understand this perplexing book, we must always remember that obscure passages must be interpreted in the light of the clear teachings of the Scripture, not vice versa.
2. Only by a thorough acquaintance with the prophetic portion of the Old Testament is one prepared to interpret and teach this volume.
3. Although John's message is saturated with allusions to the Old Testament, we must not

force Old Testament meanings upon John's words. Let John apply his own meanings. The important question is not where John got his material, but what the Holy Spirit is saying through John. Learn the general use of a certain symbol and then look for John's application.

4. To properly understand the book, the student must seek to know the author, the conditions under which he wrote and his relation to those who received the message. Also, the conditions the recipients were facing is essential background material.

5. "We must try to feel as Christians felt when they saw their brethren torn by wild beasts of the amphitheater, or stand as living torches each in his pitchy tunic, on one ghastly night in Rome." — F. Farrar.

6. We must be reminded not to give to symbolic numbers a literal interpretation. Also the opposite is true, we must not give to a number a symbolic meaning that was intended to be understood literally.

7. "Similar prophecies of the same event must be carefully compared in order to ellucidate more clearly the sense of the prediction." — T. H. Horne.

8. It is usual with the prophets to express the same thing in a great variety of ways. These different expressions of the same lesson amplify and clarify the lesson being set forth.

9. "A chronological *order* of time is not always to

be looked for in prophetic writings; for they frequently resume topics which they have formerly treated, after other subjects have intervened and discuss them yet more." — Horne.

10. As symbolic actions and prophetic visions greatly resemble parables, and were employed for the same purpose, i.e., more powerfully to instruct and gain the attention of the people, they must be interpreted in the same way as parables. Find the central truth which is being portrayed and let the details fit in in the most natural way.

11. We need to be reminded not to pry curiously beyond what is expressly written, nor should we interpret as being fulfilled, prophecies which are yet future. Similarly if a prophecy is once certainly and completely fulfilled, we have no right to look for some additional fulfillment.

12. "Concerning commentaries, the views of the writers on Revelation are so utterly conflicting that the student soon finds himself driven to take from each whatever of useful suggestions he may find and then proceed independently in his search for the meaning and lesson of the book." — J. A. Smith.

13. In Revelation, we have an interpretation of history, not as man sees it, but as God sees it.

14. What the student must consider in each attempted interpretation is not whether every minute detail can be explained and every question answered, but whether the system has

grasped the main points of the book and successfully explained them in a logical, internally harmonistic way that is consistent with the rest of the scripture.

15. Remember that God alone has the final word in interpreting prophecy. He gave the vision, He knows the true answer (2 Peter 1:20).
16. We should approach the book with that humility of spirit which is willing at times to frankly say, "I do not know." — D.W. Richardson.
17. Remember that the benefits are so many and the lessons so vital, that whether we ever master the interpretation of all its symbols, we will still be enriched beyond measure by our study.

Without doubt the Revelation is the most difficult book of inspiration to understand. Its perplexing message has given birth to varied response by Bible students:

A. Many are so awed by its mysterious symbols that they avoid studying it.
B. Others display a fascinated obsession with its visions and consume all their study hours upon it.
C. Serious scholars have produced a wider range and variety of interpretations for this book than any other of the Bible.
D. It has often been the playground of religious eccentrics who abuse it to work out their own personal time table for future events and to find

alleged proof for their human doctrines that could not be sustained by clear simple references.

The most amazing thing regarding the expositors of Revelation is the utter dogmatism with which they set forth their theory of interpretation and likewise dismiss or attack the views of other wise men. Some interpreters have been most confident in their ignorance of the book and its meaning.

Let us study John's masterpiece with all diligence, being assured that the Giver of every perfect gift will bestow upon us the needed wisdom. The suggestions of this paper will help us to "handle aright" this portion of God's Word.

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APPENDIX B

WHEN WAS THE BOOK OF REVELATION WRITTEN?

Wayne Jackson

Traditionally, the Book of Revelation has been dated near the end of the first century, around 96 A.D. Some writers, however, have advanced the old Preterist (from a Latin word meaning "that which is past") view contending that the Apocalypse was penned around 68 or 69 A.D., and thus the thrust of the book is supposed to relate to the impending destruction of Jerusalem (70 A.D.). Admittedly a few prominent names have been associated with this position (e.g., Stuart, Schaff, Lightfoot, and our own Foy E. Wallace, Jr.) and for a decade or so it was rather popular among scholars. James Orr has observed, however, that recent criticism has reverted to the traditional date of near 96 A.D. (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, IV, p. 2584.) This writer believes that the evidence for the later date is extremely strong and, in view of some of the bizarre theories that have surfaced in recent times — which are dependent upon the old Preterist interpretation — offers the following for consideration.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE — The external evidence for the late dating of Revelation is of the highest quality.

A. Irenaeus (180 A.D.), a student of the renowned Polycarp (who was a disciple of the apostle John) wrote that the Apocalyptic vision "was seen not very long ago, almost in our own generation, at the close of the reign of Domitian." (*Against Heresies*, V, 30.) The testimony of Irenaeus, not far removed from the apostolic age, is first rate and he places the book near the end of Domitian's reign (Domitian died in 96 A.D.). In fact, Irenaeus seems to be completely unaware of any other view of the book's date!

B. Clement of Alexandria (155-215 A.D.) says that John returned from the isle of Patmos "after the tyrant was dead," (*Who Is The Rich Man*, 42) and Eusebius, known as the "Father of Church History," (324 A.D.) identifies the "tyrant" as Domitian. (*Ecclesiastical History*, III, 23.) Even Moses Stuart, America's most prominent Preterist, admitted that the "tyrant here meant is probably Domitian." Within this narrative Clement further speaks of John as an "old man." If Revelation was written prior to 70 A.D., it would scarcely seem appropriate to refer to John, who would then be but in his early sixties, as an "old man." Particularly is this so since Timothy in his thirties was still called a "youth." (1 Timothy 4:12; Cf. Conybeare & Howson, *Life & Epistles of Paul*, p. 830.) It has been objected though, that Clement represents the apostle as running and that such could hardly be

true of a man near ninety. But Clement specifically says that John ran, being "forgetful of his age."

C. Victorinus (late 3rd C.), author of the earliest commentary on the Book of Revelation, wrote: "When John said these things, he was in the island of Patmos, condemned to the mines by Caesar Domitian. There he saw the Apocalypse; and when at length grown old, he thought that he should receive his release by suffering; but Domitian being killed, he was liberated." (Commentary on the Revelation, 10:11.)

D. Jerome (340-420 A.D.) said, "In the fourteenth then after Nero, Domitian having raised up a second persecution, he was banished to the island of Patmos, and wrote the Apocalypse . . ." (*Lives of Illustrious Men*, 9.)

E. To all of this may be added the comment of Eusebius who contends that the historical tradition of his time (324 A.D.) placed the writing of the Apocalypse at the close of Domitian's reign. (*Eccl. Hist.*, III, 18.)

McClintock and Strong, in contending for the later date, declare that "there is no mention in any writer of the first three centuries of any other time or place." (*Cyclopedia*, VIII, p. 1064.) Upon the basis of external evidence therefore, there is little contest between the earlier and later dates.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE — The content of the Book of Revelation also suggests a late date as the following observations reveal.

A. The spiritual conditions of the churches men-

tioned in Revelation 2 and 3 seem to more readily harmonize with the late date. "The church in Ephesus, for instance, was not founded by Paul until the latter part of Claudian's reign: and when he wrote to them from Rome, A.D. 61, instead of reproving them for any want of love, he commends their love and faith (Ephesians 1:15)." (*Horne's Introduction*, 1841, II, p. 382.) Yet when Revelation was written, in spite of the fact that the Ephesians had been patient (2:2), they had also left their first love (2:4) and this would appear to require a greater lapse of time than seven or eight years, as the earlier date would demand.

B. The book was penned while John was banished to Patmos (1:9). It is well known Domitian had a fondness for this type of persecution. (Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, III, 18.) Besides, it hardly appears reasonable that Nero, who is reported to have beheaded Paul and crucified Peter (*Ibid.*, II, 25.), would have been content to merely banish their co-apostle!

C. The church at Laodicea is represented as existing under conditions of great wealth. "Thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing" (3:17). In 60 A.D., however, Laodicea had been almost entirely destroyed by an earthquake. It seems likely that it would have required more than a mere eight or nine years to rise to the description conveyed in the apocalyptic epistle.

D. The doctrinal departures described in Revelation would appear to better fit the later dating. For

example, the Nicolaitans (2:6,15) were a full-fledged sect at the time of John's writing, whereas they had only been hinted at in general terms in 2 Peter and Jude which were written possibly around 65-66 A.D.

E. Persecution for professing the Christian faith is evident in the letters of Revelation 2 and 3 to the churches of Asia Minor. Antipas had been killed in Paegamum (2:13). It is generally agreed among scholars, though, that "Nero's persecution seems to have been confined to Rome and was not for religious reasons." (Everett Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 446.)

ARGUMENTS FOR THE EARLY DATE ANSWERED — In the absence of external evidence in support of the early dating of Revelation, Preterists generally rely on what they conceive to be internal support for their view. In the main, their arguments are:

A. *NOTE:* On the matter of external support, some of the older writers argued for an early date on the basis of a superscription in the Peshitta Syriac version (thought to date from the 2nd. C.) which asserted John was banished to Patmos in Nero's reign. It is now known that the Peshitta is but a 5th century revision of the Old Syriac, which did not even, in fact, contain the Book of Revelation. (A. T. Robertson, *Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 114.)

B. The most popular argument for the early date suggests that John's Gospel Account has a much

smoother style of Greek than does the Apocalypse. Thus the latter must have been written many years prior to the Gospel when the apostle was not so experienced in the literary employment of Greek. To this it may be replied:

(1) "Archaeological discoveries and literary studies have recently demonstrated that along with Aramaic and Hebrew, Greek was commonly spoken among first century Palestinians. Thus John must have known and used Greek since his youth." (R. H. Gundry, *Survey of the New Testament*, p. 365.)

(2) B. B. Warfield contends that "the Apocalypse betrays no lack of knowledge of, or command over, Greek syntax or vocabulary: the difference lies, rather, in the manner in which a language well in hand is used, in style, properly so called; and the solution of it must turn on psychological, and not chronological, considerations." (*Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*, 1894, III, p. 2036.)

(3) R. H. Charles, author of the commentary on Revelation in the I.C.C. series, and "perhaps the greatest expert on apocalyptic literature, regarded the 'bad grammar' as deliberate, for purposes of emphasis and allusion to Old Testament passages in Hebraic style, rather than due to ignorance or blundering." (Gundry, *op. cit.*) In the 404 verses of Revelation, Westcott and Hort's *Greek New Testament* gives over 500 references and allusions to the OT.

(4) Moreover, as McClintock and Strong point

out: "It may be admitted that the Revelation has many surprising grammatical peculiarities. But much of this is accounted for by the fact that it was probably written down, as it was seen, 'in the Spirit,' while the ideas, in all their novelty and vastness, filled the apostle's mind, and rendered him less capable of attending to forms of speech. His Gospel and Epistles, on the other hand, were composed equally under divine influence, but an influence of a gentler, more ordinary kind, with much care, after long deliberation, after frequent recollection and recital of the facts, and deep pondering of the doctrinal truths which they involve." (VIII, p. 1064.)

C. It is claimed that Revelation must have been penned prior to 70 A.D. as it has no allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem, but rather represents both the city and the temple as still standing. First, if John wrote this work near 96, there would be little need to emphasize the destruction of 70 A.D. since the lessons of that catastrophe would have been well learned in the preceding quarter of a century. Some scholars see a figurative reference to Jerusalem's destruction in 11:8. Second, the contention that the literal city and temple were still standing ignores the express symbolic nature of the narrative. Salmon says of Revelation 11 that it is "difficult to understand how anyone could have imagined that the vision represents the temple as still standing. For the whole scene is laid in heaven, and the temple that is measured is the heavenly temple (11:19; 15:5). We have only to compare this vision with the parallel vision of a measuring-reed seen by

Ezekiel (ch. 40), in which the prophet is commanded to measure — surely not the city which it is stated had been demolished fourteen years previously, but the city of the future seen by the prophet in vision." (George Salmon, *Introduction to the NT*, p. 238.)

D. Some argue for an early date of the Apocalypse by asserting that the enigmatical 666 (13:18) is a reference to Nero. This is possible only if one: (1) adds the title "Caesar" to Nero's name; (2) computes the title-name on the basis of the Hebrew language (Revelation was written in Greek); and, (3) the spelling of "Caesar" is altered by dropping the Hebrew *yodh*. All of this reveals a desperate attempt to find Nero in the passage. Additionally, Leon Morris has pointed out that Irenaeus discussed "a number of views of what 666 symbolizes, but he did not even include Nero in his list, let alone regard this as a likely conjecture." (*The Revelation of St. John*, p. 38.) Noted critic Theodor Zann contended that Nero was not suggested as a possibility for 666 until the year 1831.

In view of the foregoing, to date the Book of Revelation around 96 A.D. best fits all of the known facts.

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FOOTNOTES

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1. Permission to quote Lindsey and Walvoord was granted by Zondervan Publishing and Vision House Publications.

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